

# THE DIASPORA



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**BI-WEEKLY**

Issue. 53

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



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

HAPPY  
*New Year*

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

  FIA NY-NJ-NE SALUTES    
  THE PANDEMIC HEROES  

# Biden's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans includes four Indian-Americans.

Photo: indicanews

**O**n December 23, US President Joe Biden announced his decision to name four Indian Americans to his Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders: Ajay Jain Bhutoria, Sonal Shah, Kamal Kalsi, and Smita Shah. According to the White House, the Commission will advise the President on how the public, corporate, and non-profit sectors may collaborate to improve fairness and opportunity for all Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI). It is also tasked with advising the President on anti-Asian xenophobia and violence policies, ways to build capacity in AANHPI communities through federal grant-making, and policies to address the intersectional barriers that AANHPI women, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities face, according to a media release. Bhutoria is a Silicon Valley technology executive, community leader, speaker, and author that has been recognized for his work, the White House said.

He is a passionate advocate for the South Asian and AAPI com-

munities in the areas of small businesses, educational opportunities, immigration issues, and technological advancement. His expertise in the areas of organizational transformations and change management has supported critical advancements within the AAPI community, and he is committed to the creation of a compassionate and empowering environment for all, the White House said.

Dr. Kalsi, an emergency medicine physician from New Jersey who has served in the Army for 20 years, was awarded a Bronze Star medal for his work taking care of hundreds of combat casualties on the front lines in Afghanistan. "He has transitioned into the Army reserves, and now serves as a senior advisor for Policy Vets and a Fellow of the Truman National Security Project's Defense Council. He founded the Sikh American Veterans Alliance (SAVA) in order to promote diversity, religious freedom, and service," the White House said.

Sonal Shah is a social impact and innovation leader who has launched and led social impact efforts in academia, government, and the private and philanthrop-

ic sectors for over 25 years. She is the founding president of The Asian American Foundation (TAAF), starting the largest philanthropic effort to serve the AANHPI communities. Prior to TAAF, Shah founded and led Georgetown University's Beeck Center for Social Impact and Innovation, providing students a first-hand opportunity to work on social impact projects in the public, private, and

social sectors. She served as Deputy Assistant to then-President Obama and created the White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, worked on international development at the Department of Treasury, and led social impact efforts at Google and Goldman Sachs. Smita N Shah is an engineer, entrepreneur, and civic leader serving as president and CEO of Chicago-based SPAAN Tech, Inc, a multi-disciplinary

firm with expertise in public and private infrastructure projects including transportation, aviation, and facilities. She serves in various roles with the Chicago Plan Commission, MIT, the Museum of Science and Industry, After-School Matters, Delhi Chicago Sister Cities Program, YPO, the Lincoln Academy of Illinois, and the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago.



(Top L to R) Sonal Shah, Smita Shah, (bottom L to R) Kamal Kalsi, Ajay Jain Bhutoria.

# Meera Joshi appointed Deputy Mayor of Operations in New York.

**N**ew York City Mayor-elect Eric Adams named five deputy mayors on December 20, including Indian American attorney Meera Joshi.

"For us to ensure that NYC recovers quickly while addressing the inequalities that plagued us well before COVID-19 struck, we must have top leadership that can both deliver for and is representative of New Yorkers. I'm proud to introduce 5 history-making Deputy Mayors today," Adams tweeted.

As Deputy Mayor for Operations, Joshi will ensure that New York City is able to respond in

real-time to meet and exceed the needs of every community and be a model of excellence for all urban centers, noted Adams.

Joshi has been the acting administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier and Safety Administration since January.

Under her leadership, New York City mandated the reporting of granular trip data from large app operators, which informed landmark data-driven safety reforms, enforceable pay standards for drivers, and meaningful access to service for the disabled," her profile on the transportation.gov says. Prior to joining the Department of Transportation,

Joshi was the inspector general for New York City's Department of Corrections, where she was in charge of investigating corruption and criminality at all levels of the city's jail operations, as well as the first deputy executive director of New York City's Civilian Complaint Review Board, where she led investigations into police misconduct, according to her bio.

In addition to her government posts, she was the general manager of Sam Schwartz Transportation Consultants' New York office and a visiting scholar at New York University's Rudin Center for Transportation Policy.

She was born and reared in

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. and a J.D.

Photo: ttnews



# FIA holds Annual General Council Meeting

**T**he Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) held its annual general council meeting on December 29th, 2021. As part of the COVID protocols, the ceremony was hosted by an online video conferencing mode. The meeting started by addressing the attendees and having a presentation overview by Mr. Parveen Bansal. Later on, Mr. Anil Bansal thanked the FIA Fraternity for their support and wished the best to everyone as his presidential term comes to an end.

Mr. Kenny Desai, President-elect 2022, began with season's greetings and shared his thoughts and ideas for the new term, followed by Abhishek Singh as he wished holiday greetings to all FIA members. Mr. Deepak Rathod and Mr. Rakesh Kavsari gave a detailed presentation on 2021 FIA-NE activities. There they spoke about all the community activities and services provided by the FIA-NE.

Mr. Sanjay Gokhale talked about the vision and goals of 2022, stressing the need to form a few new committees such as health, sports, and cultural volunteer committees, as well as plans like adopting a highway. Dr. Sudhir Parekh praised FIA's efforts and pledged his continued support to the organization. Dr. H.R. Shah wished to continue his life time support for FIA and hoped that it would grow into a nationwide organization.

Later in the meeting, Mr. Anil Bansal and Mr. Kenny Desai announced the incoming team of FIA Tri-State 2022. After which, Parveen Bansal walked the attendees through the activities and achievements of 2021.

Mr. Bipin Patel talked about and appreciated the tremendous number of successful events organized by FIA throughout the year and wished the best to the new team of 2022. Following that, Mr. Ram Gadhavi also congratulated the whole FIA team for doing so well so far and suggested getting involved in some

American activities as well to get due recognition. Mr. Prabir Roy mentioned how FIA has expanded and broadened its horizons over the decades and wished FIA the best.

Mr. Ankur Vaidya thanked the FIA team and board members for their distinct contributions, roles, and responsibilities towards the success and betterment of the organization. He also discussed the changes and bylaws. In the concluding part, Mr. Amit Ringasia presented a summary of the treasurer's report, and Mr. Parveen Bansal gave a vote of thanks to the FIA fraternity.



# Sam Joshi, the youngest Mayor of Edison, NJ, has been sworn in.

**When a young Indian-American businessman, Sam Joshi, 32, who was born and raised in this city, was sworn in to govern Edison Township on January 1, 2022, it was an emotional time for the community.**

And it was only fitting that the ceremony is held at John P. Stevens High School, the institution that helped Joshi shape his dreams and strengthen his leadership qualities from a young age, according to Gail Pawlikowski, the former principal of John P. Stevens, when she invited Joshi to be sworn in on stage. With about 200 people in attendance, including Joshi's parents and relatives, the young man spoke in a business-like tone about announcing timelines to meet all of the goals he had talked about during his campaign and investing in the unity and diversity of the town with the highest concentration of Asians, particularly those of South Asian origin.

Joshi, on the other hand, was emotional and spoke movingly about his roots, recounting how his parents immigrated to the United States 34 years ago and settled in Edison, where they opened a small convenience store in the hopes of "earning enough money to buy a home and raise a family in hopes that their children would have the opportunities that they never did."

Joshi and his Council running mates Nishith Patel, Margot Harris, and John Poyner were sworn in by Mayor Steve Fulop of Jersey City and committed to serving the community while in office.

Principal Pawlikowski said that even during his years at the high school, Joshi displayed his charisma, people skills, and leadership qualities. "It was clear to all who knew him that he was destined for a career in government from the way he carried himself, to the way he addressed others, [and] to the way he handled controversy," Pawlikowski said in her speech. "Sam had the charisma, the intelligence, and the calling to serve. His leadership qualities served him well in classes and all his extracurricular activities," the former principal said, adding, "Now Sam will serve his commu-

nity and be a role model..."

Joshi harkened back to history about how the township he now leads, gained its name from inventor Thomas Edison 145 years ago, and now, it was time for another breakthrough – the need for action on the visions of leaders – bringing unity.

Edison, Joshi noted, is home to every culture, religion, ethnicity, and economic status. "And because of this, we have a multitude of different viewpoints and different priorities we must navigate," he said.

Joshi said his team would provide deadlines for the goals he has outlined during his campaign within the next few weeks, in his distinctive down-to-earth way.

He asked for the community's continuing support and pledged to be freely accessible to every-

body. "I need you and Edison needs you. If we come together and work toward our common goals, there are no limits to the heights to be achieved," he said.

Quoting Mahatma Gandhi's famous words, "Be the change you wish to see in this world," Joshi said, "I wish for Edison to be the catalyst of unity and good government," ending with an enthusiastic standing ovation from the audience where his father, mother and other members of the family stood on the front row.

"This is something that I've been looking forward to for a very long time," Joshi said. "This is a new day. This is a new chapter in Edison Township and I look forward to serving each and every single one of you. I'm standing with my family right now (which) has been a bedrock for hope and

inspiration," Joshi said.

Growing up in Edison, he gained a true appreciation for the values shared by the community, "Values like diversity and acceptance which was a must in a school system with students from all over the world," Joshi said.

Joshi said he became a member of the government at the age of 14 when he joined the Edison Youth Service Corps, and that his involvement taught him how local government can have a meaningful influence on people's daily lives. "With that experience in mind, I can promise to you that we will set a new standard of excellence in local government and that I will do my best each and every day to run a modern, efficient and honest government that all residents can be proud of."

*Photo: Newsindiatimes*



*Mayor of Edison, N.J. Sam Joshi with members of the family and community.*



*Sam Joshi (left), being sworn in as Mayor of Edison.*



*Around 200 people attended the swearing-in ceremony of Sam Joshi as Mayor of Edison.*



*Mayor of Edison, N.J. Sam Joshi with Edison youth, posing for a photo at his swearing in ceremony.*

# FIA Welcomes New Initiatives By NYC Administration

**R**ecognition at the local, state and federal levels demonstrates the Indian American community's growing influence in mainstream American society. Recently, the committee chaired by councilman Mr. Peter A. Koo, under the New York City Council, City Hall, NY-10007, on Tuesday, December 14, 2021, has graciously approved the co-naming of Bowne Street (the block between Holy Avenue and 45th Avenue) as "Ganesh Temple Street." This has been a great recognition

of the Hindu Ganesh Temple, situated on Bowne Street, Flushing, New York. Famous Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt got married to Richa Sharma in October 1987 at this famous venue. Another political accomplishment by the Indian American Community of New York City is the announcement of Dr. Ashwin Vasani, who will replace Dr. Dave Chokshi as NYC Health Commissioner in March 2022.

Dr. Vasani will serve as senior advisor for public health in the interim, NYC Mayor-elect Eric

Adams told & media that Dr. Vasani will bring 20 years of expertise and experience working in the public health sector to combat covid-19. Another reputable Indian American, Dr. Dave A. Choksi, the outgoing health commissioner under Mayor Bill de Blasio, will end his term in March 2022.

Starting from US Vice President Kamala Harris to US Congress States Senates and assemblies various municipal councilmen and other prestigious positions are adored by very

brilliant, talented, hardworking resourceful Indians. Over the last two decades, US presidents have repeatedly appointed to their administration's deserving multi-talented experts with extensive experience in their specialized fields.

This successful trend can be attributed to the increasing Indian manpower (voting potential) and money power as well as political participation. The FIA applauds and welcomes these individuals for doing India proud and adding to America's success story.

# BAPS Charities distributes 500 hot meals and a \$10,000 donation to The Good Karma Los Angeles.

**B**APS Charities volunteers teamed up with The Good Karma Los Angeles on December 12 to distribute 500 hot meals and other essentials on Skid Row to commemorate the launch of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir - Los Angeles' 10th Anniversary celebrations and His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj's centennial birth celebrations. BAPS Charities also contributed \$10,000 to The Good Karma Los Angeles in support of their efforts to assist the city's homeless population.

Photo: Indiawest

Community service has always been an important aspect of the history of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir - Los Angeles (Chino Hills). This year, to commemorate the mandir's 10th anniversary and to honour Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 100th birthday, the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Los Angeles, and BAPS Charities continued their mission of giving back to the community by partnering with The Good Karma Los Angeles, a non-profit organization that provides hot meals.

Vishal Narayan, Indian American co-founder of The Good Karma Los Angeles, shared his

gratitude: "It is such a humbling moment to have BAPS Charities partner with us. It is important to make a direct impact on the community. We started during the pandemic when all the homeless shelters shut down in Los Angeles County, we noticed that there were a lot more unhoused people in Los Angeles that were starving. There is definitely a need to be out here and we are going to continue to do just that," he said, according to a press release.

For the past 76 weeks, the Good Karma Los Angeles has been on Skid Row, delivering hot meals and offering other ne-

cessities to the homeless. Hersh Chopra, a volunteer with The Good Karma Los Angeles, added, "We try to come out here every Sunday to do our part of helping the unhoused community. We are always blessed with food and shelter. These unhoused communities need the support from charities such as The Good Karma Los Angeles and BAPS Charities, so it is our duty to give back. We are blessed in many ways, so we get to share that blessing with them as well."

BAPS Charities volunteer Deven Patel remarked: "The importance of efforts like we did today was that often times there are efforts being taken to feed the unhoused individuals in areas such as this in Skid Row, but organizations such as The Good Karma are always looking for help, so it was really nice that BAPS Charities was able to come out and join forces with them. By having a large group, we were able to cover more ground in this radius, therefore a majority of the people were able to get food, water, cliff bars, bananas, whatever it was that they needed."



BAPS Charities volunteers, teamed up with The Good Karma Los Angeles to distribute hot meals

# SACO organizes Drive-Thru Covid-19 Testing in New Jersey

Photo: VOSA/YouTube

**T**he rise in COVID cases in America has taken a toll on the citizens looking into that the South Asian community outreach has started with drive through COVID testing. While addressing the Voice of South Asia, Sam Khan said, "It is a sensitive time for the community, especially with the current surge in COVID cases. What we are trying to do as a community is put together these kinds of platforms and venues to help the community. This is a good gesture, I can see,

but the problem is that it is very difficult to get people involved in this because of the COVID, but we are here always. The South Asian community is always there."

South Asian Community Outreach organised the drive for COVID Testing, which was sponsored by Mak Health, MAK Health Services, and Sunrise Clinical Lab. The COVID testing was done under the CDC guidelines. The test report is provided within 24-48 hours. The testing times are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will last till next week.



# The Metro Classic back to New Jersey

**M**ays Landing doctor Mukesh Roy and his brother Pryia's life are arguably more interwoven with basketball and COVID-19 than anyone in New Jersey. The brothers introduced the Metro Classic high school boys' basketball showcase tournament to RWJBarnabas Health Arena in Toms River for the first time in the winter of 2020. It was a resounding success. Wildwood Catholic took against The Patrick School, which was led by current Golden State Warriors rookie Jonathan Kuminga, in one of the highlighted games. Roy, who works for the Ocean County Health Department as the director of disaster planning and response, was back in Toms River a year later, this

Photo: Pressofatlanticcity

time leading a COVID-19 immunization clinic. Unfortunately, the epidemic has forced the cancellation of the Metro Classic in 2021, as well as all other basketball showcase events.

Now, while the high school basketball season continues to be derailed by a statewide outbreak of COVID-19, the brothers are gearing up for the Metro Classic, which will once again include several of the country's best high school teams. "The line-up we have they're saying is the best ever in New Jersey," Mukesh said. "It's mind-boggling."

Metro Classic session one is on Jan. 13 at Cure Insurance Arena in Trenton. It is highlighted by the matchup between the Camden boys' team and national power Montverde Academy of Florida. It's arguably the nation's best

public school in Camden against the nation's best private school in Montverde. Session two is Feb. 3 to 6 in Toms River and will feature New Jersey powers Camden, Gill St. Bernard and Bergen Catholic, and 18 other teams. "We were very disappointed not to be able to do the event in 2021," Pryia said. "We started making calls early for (2022). People wanted to play. A lot of people wanted to play." Camden and star junior player D.J. Wagner were sought for at nearly every showcase throughout the country. The Panthers' season opener versus Roselle Catholic was broadcast on ESPNU earlier this month. Camden is hosting two games in the Metro Classic. Pryia stated, "Having a national team in New Jersey works wonders." "It gives all of the teams in the state a boost."

They played high school basketball in Rahway and Scotch Plains, both in Union County. They appear to know just about everyone in every gym they walk into thanks to their careers and passion for basketball. The Roys have watched and attended many games over the years, and have built a connection with Kevin Boyle, the former Patrick School coach who is now the head coach of national power Montverde. Boyle wanted to play some New Jersey teams when he acquired the Montverde position. The Met-

ro Classic was founded by the brothers in 2013, partially to provide him with that chance and to generate funds for charity.

In terms of the pandemic, Roy has been a part of the fight against COVID-19 since the beginning. The brothers are well aware of the difficulties of organizing an event under these circumstances. They intend to use the Classic to raise awareness about the benefits of vaccination. "We're going to partner with the state health department and RWJBarnabas to make sure the arena is safe," Pryia said. "Let's not get crazy. This is just basketball."

Despite numerous postponements and cancellations due to COVID-19, the holiday events this week delivered some spectacular basketball moments. It's important that organizers and high schools do all possible to ensure that showcase events are held safely this season. Basketball players have it the worst in 2020-21. Because of the pandemic, no showcase events, tournaments, or state playoffs were organized.

It would be unjust if this happened to these sportsmen for the second season in a row. "Everyone does feel short-changed that last year we weren't able to have state champions," Pryia said. "We want people to come out (to come out to the Metro Classic) and really celebrate New Jersey basketball."



Feb 8, 2020, the Wildwood Catholic boys basketball team takes on the Patrick School at the Metro Classic basketball tournament.

# Ashwin Vasan, an Indian American, has been appointed as the new Health Commissioner by New York City Mayor-elect Eric Adams.

**N**ew York City Mayor-elect Eric Adams said on December 22 that Dr. Dave A. Chokshi will continue to serve as Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene until March 15, 2022, at which point Indian American Dr. Ashwin Vasan will take over. In the interim, he will act as Senior Adviser for Public Health. According to a news statement, the appointments will provide continuity and a smooth transi-

*Photo: doctors.nyp.org*



tion of leadership as New York City continues to address the rise of COVID-19 cases caused by the Omicron variety.

The Health Commissioner will be a major leader and counselor to Mayor Adams on all COVID-19 pandemic initiatives. As Omicron's caseload continues to rise, Adams emphasized the significance of a smooth transition that permits the City's COVID response to stay successful.

"We are at a critical moment in our fight against COVID-19. The virus is a formidable opponent, and our city's response to it must be smart and strong. For the next three months as we get through this surge, Dr. Chokshi will continue the excellent work he is doing now to increase testing capacity, promote vaccinations and boosters, and stop the spread of this virus," said Adams.

"In March, we will welcome Dr. Vasan to lead DOHMH. Dr. Vasan brings 20 years of expertise and experience working in public health that will ensure New Yorkers are well-equipped to continue the fight against COVID-19. After Dr. Vasan assumes the role, we will build on the progress we have made, ensuring that we

continue our fight against the pandemic while delivering on my public health priorities, from boosting mental health services to promoting healthy food in city facilities. My vow to New Yorkers is simple: Under my leadership, we will make this city safer, healthier, and a better place to raise healthy children and families," Adams said.

"Serving as New York City's Health Commissioner has been a privilege of a lifetime, and I'm grateful for the opportunity. I feel a deep sense of duty and care for our city — and I'm committed to our city's COVID response, as I have been for the past two years. New York City can count on me to see us through another winter," Commissioner Chokshi said.

"I am deeply honored and humbled to join Mayor-elect Adams' administration to help New Yorkers fight back against COVID-19, and I am grateful to Dr. Chokshi for his tireless work on behalf of our city. Make no mistake: we will stop the spread of this virus. We will also deliver on the Mayor-elect's public health priorities by fixing our broken mental health system and ensuring equitable access to clean air,

clean water, healthy food, and affordable healthcare," Vasan said. Chokshi has been the 43rd Health Commissioner of New York City since August 2020.

Vasan, M.D., Ph.D., is the president and CEO of Fountain House, a national charity dedicated to improving health, increasing opportunities, and reducing social and economic isolation for persons suffering from major mental illness. According to the statement, Vasan has expanded Fountain House from a direct service provider in New York City to a national leader in mental health. Vasan is both a practicing physician and an academic, serving as an Assistant Professor at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Vasan has previously worked for Partners In Health and the World Health Organization to improve access to HIV/AIDS treatment. He earned a Master of Science in epidemiology from Harvard, an MD from the University of Michigan, and a Ph.D. in Public Health from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

## India-US Forum of Monroe Township (IFM) - Annual Food Donation Drive

**T**he India-US Forum of Monroe Township (IFM), a local non-profit organisation, is a recognized 501c3 that collaborates with numerous community partners and people to achieve its five-pillar-directed purpose. Throughout the 2021 Thanksgiving and December Holiday Seasons, this community-wide effort resulted in a collective gift of more than 16,000 pounds of non-perishables for the community partner, Rise Food Pantry in Hightstown, NJ.

Pictured are IFM Executive Committee members, young vol-

unteers, and members of the community, exemplifying the partnership between different groups to guarantee food is on our neighbors' tables during this difficult time.



*IFM Executive Committee Members, youth volunteers, and members of the Indian-American community.*



# The United States will waive in-person interviews for H-1B and other visas until 2022.

**M**ukesh Aghi, Indian American president and CEO of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, said on December 24 that the United States State Department's decision to waive several in-person interview requirements at embassies and consulates for non-immigrant visas, particularly H-1B visas, is a welcome step.

According to the trade body's chief, the State Department acknowledges the enormous influence of temporary work visas on the American economy, as H-1B visas serve as a critical connection linking India's tech expertise for America's innovation sector.

"The State Department's decision to waive several in-person interview requirements at embassies and consulates for non-immigrant visas, particularly H-1B visas, is a welcome move," he told ANI. "The pandemic has precluded mobility and several Indian nationals in the United States haven't been able to travel back for stamping. At the same time, several folks in India were unable to get appointments at the local missions due to COVID protocols and delayed

wait times. The State Department recognizes the immense impact of temporary work visas (particularly H-1B) to the U.S. economy, as H-1Bs visas serve as the vital link connecting India's tech talent for America's tech economy. Hence, this is a win-win situation for both countries," the USISPF



president added. Amid mounting fears of a COVID-19 spike, the United States said on December 23 that it will temporarily waive the in-person interview requirement for various work visa categories, including H-1B, L-1, and O-1.

Applicants for H-1B, L-1, and O-1 visas applying from outside the United States will not be needed to attend an in-person interview at a U.S. consulate, which is generally the final step before a visa is given. These are the most popular visa kinds used by busi-

*Photo: thehindu*

nesses to hire high-skilled employees from outside.

The consular officers are now temporarily authorized, through Dec. 31, 2022, to waive in-person interviews for certain individual petition-based non-immigrant work visas and their qualify-

ing derivatives in the following categories: Persons in Specialty Occupations (H-1B visas); Trainee or Special Education Visitors (H-3 visas); Intracompany Transferees (L visas); Individuals with Extraordinary Ability or Achievement (O visas); Athletes, Artists, and Entertainers (P visas); and Participants in International Cultural Exchange Programs (Q visas); according to a U.S. State Department release.

Additionally, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has extended consular officers' current ability to waive the in-person interview, through Dec. 31, 2022, for the following other categories of non-immigrant visas: Temporary Agricultural and Non-agricultural Workers (H-2 visas), Students (F and M visas), and Student Exchange Visitors (Academic J visas). However, embassies and consulates may still require an in-person interview on a case-by-case basis and dependent upon local conditions.

"We encourage applicants to check embassy and consulate websites for more detailed information about this development, as well as current operating status and services," added the release.

## India has risen to become the world's second-largest startup hub: Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

**P**rime Minister Narendra Modi stated on December 28 that India has become the world's second-largest startup ecosystem, thanks in large part to students from the Indian Institutes of Technology.

Addressing the 54th convocation ceremony of IIT Kanpur, the Prime Minister said, "In this 75th year of independence, we have over 75 unicorns, over 50,000 startups. Of these, 10,000 have

come only in the last 6 months. India has emerged to be the second biggest startup hub in the world, and this feat has been achieved majorly with the help of students from IITs." Modi said IIT Kanpur's contribution in developing 5G technology has been recognized globally.

The Prime Minister said when India will celebrate its 100th year of independence, it will include the contribution of all the students who are present here today.

"In the last 7 years, several programs have been introduced by the Center to aid students. The youth is being readied to face bigger challenges more efficiently with the help of National Education Policy," said Modi. He further said that everyone should strive religiously for achieving Atmanirbhar Bharat. "We should have achieved a lot of things by the time India completed 25 years of independence. But unfortunately, we could not do much. But now,

we do not have even two minutes to waste. We must strive religiously for a self-reliant nation," he added.

He also said that only young people can help India to become self-sufficient. "This century is completely technology-driven. Students have invested the most important years of their lives in learning about technology. And this will make it impossible for any other force to stop you from excelling," said the PM.



# 83' Provides an Incomparable Experience

'83', directed by Kabir Khan, is a reconstruction of a historic event: the Indian cricket team's first-ever World Cup triumph in 1983. Despite its predictability, the film is a thrilling and occasionally touching experience that leaves spectators with an afterglow of eager patriotism.

The film, shot in the style of a superbly-restored or reconstructed documentary, covers three and a half months of "the may or may not win" drama, in which the actors and a few of the genuine participants effortlessly weave in and out of the storyline.

The film is entirely focused on cricket and has everything that cricket lovers could have dreamed of. The storyline emphasizes and flashes key matches and moments in between, bringing memories to the big screen after nearly 38 years.

As you travel back in time, you see how the 'underdog' Indian team was treated with contempt, and how, despite all odds, they won. It's energizing to see the matches again, and your mood swings like Kapil Dev's bat. You

applaud for him as he makes history with a fantastic 175-not-out against the Zimbabwe squad, and your fury boils when you learn that the epic game was not captured on video because the BBC did not consider it significant enough.

What you see on television is Dev's charm, locker-room banter, the occasional friction and troublesome conduct among teammates, the strategy they developed for the matches, and, most importantly, the sorrow and thrills of the matches performed over that incredible summer.

Another component of the picture that could not have been better is the casting. Ranveer Singh, who wears prosthetic teeth, has an uncanny resemblance to Kapil Dev, yet he slides into his shoes with ease, giving a stunning portrayal that tugs at the emotions. Saqib Saleem portrays Mohinder Amarnath, Tahir Raj Bhasin portrays Sunil Gavaskar, Jatin Sarna portrays Yashpal Sharma, Jiiva portrays K. Srikkanth, Harrdy Sandhu portrays Madan Lal, Nishant Dahiya portrays Roger Binny, Ammy Virk portrays Balwind-

er Sandhu, Addinath Kothare portrays Dilip Vengsakar,

Boman Irani, who plays pundit Farrokh Engineer, Pankaj Tripathi, who plays PR Man Singh, Neena Gupta, who plays Ka-

pil Dev's caring and supportive mother, and Deepika Padukone, who plays Dev's wife Romi all had their on-screen moments. The picture is expertly shot, with excellent production qualities.

Photo: kenyabuzz



# Alia Bhatt: PETA's 2021 Person of the Year

**Alia Bhatt, a Bollywood actress, has been selected PETA's 2021 Person of the Year for her efforts to promote an animal-friendly fashion sector.**

Photo: twitter.com/aliaa08

The actress had lately invested in Phool, the startup that produces vegan leather from discarded temple flowers.

Her vegan kidswear business, Ed-a-Mamma, also got a 2021 PETA India fashion award for nurturing children's love for animals and nature.

Alia is well-known for her love for cats and dogs, and she frequently uses her voice to lobby for stricter animal protection

regulations. The actor has also appeared in a People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals India pro-adoption campaign to aid felines and canines.

PETA's India director of Celebrity and Public Relations, Sachin Bangera, said, "Alia Bhatt is not only helping to advance vegan fashion but also encouraging the next generation to be kind to animals." He added, "Alia doesn't hesitate to speak up, whether she's rallying her fans to adopt a

dog or cat or calling for action on crimes against animals."

PETA India's Person of the Year Award has previously been given to Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor, former Supreme Court Justice K.S. Panicker Radhakrishnan, cricketer Virat Kohli, comedian Kapil Sharma, and actors John Abraham, Anushka Sharma, Sunny Leone, R. Madhavan, Jacqueline Fernandez, Hema Malini, and Sonam Kapoor Ahuja for their contributions to animal welfare.



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## PUBLISHED BY

Federation of Indian Associations (NY-NJ-CT-PA-MA-NH-VT-RI)

Voluntary Content  
Chandrakant Trivedi

Voluntary Design & Graphics  
Gracia Marcom

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