

# THE DIASPORA



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

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## India Restores Tourist Visa

New Feature

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# INAUGURAL MEETING OF FIA PARADE COUNCIL



**F**IA held its Parade Council meeting on 23rd March 2022 at Akbar Restaurant in Edison New Jersey. The meeting started by observing a one minute silence for Shaheed Diwas in respect to the martyrs of the Nation Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. The meeting was presided over by the Executive Committee - President Mr. Kenny Desai, Vice President Mr. Saurin Parikh, 2nd Vice President Mr. Haresh Shah, Ex. Vice President, Secretary Mr. Parveen Bansal, Jt. Secretary Ms. Smita Miki Patel, Treasurer Mr. Amit Ringasia and

Jt. Treasurer Mr Mahesh Dubal.

Also present were the Chairman Mr. Ankur Vaidya and members of the Board of Trustees - Padma Shri H.R. Shah, Padma Shri Dr. Sudhir Parikh, Mr. Srujal Parikh and Mr. Andy Bhatia.

Mr. Kenny Desai began the proceedings. He thanked everyone for showing up and said that each of the FIA member are the ambassadors of FIA. He outlined the events that are being held in the year for the celebration of Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav - celebrating the 75 years of Indian Independence. Gujarat and Maharashtra Day which would

be celebrated with the Consul General of India, *Dance Pe Chance* with 600 kids participating, event at the Capitol Hill in Washington celebrating 50 years of FIA, Yoga Day again being celebrated with the CGI NY, the Flag Hoisting at the Times Square, Ringing of the Nasdaq Bell and the Illumination of The Empire State Building. The mega parade remains the biggest event wherein 3 records would be attempted for the Guinness Book of World Records and Mr. Desai requested the support of all the members to make it possible. Last but not the least he mentioned about the *Diwali Soup*

*Kitchen* where over 100 thousand impecunious will be served, not only in the United States but abroad as well including India.

He further went on to elaborate the formation of various committees to facilitate the smooth operation related to all the aspects of the mentioned events.

Padma Shri H.R. Shah reflected on his time as one of the founding members when things weren't so easy and thanked the young leaders who have brought the organisation to where it stands today.

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Padma Shri Dr. Sudhir Parikh mentioned that ever since his association with FIA for almost 30 years, it has come a long way and thanked Mr. Ankur Vaidya and his team for making FIA grow from strength to strength.

Mr. Ankur Vaidya thanked and lauded the Executive Committee members, who despite holding strong portfolios with hectic schedules in their professional lives, remain committed and work endlessly towards the cause of the FIA.

The event was also attended

by Dr. Avinash Gupta, Mr. Anurag Kumar of BJANA (Bihar & Jharkand Association of North America) and Mr. Vamsi Vasireddy of TANA (Telugu Association of North America) and by Mr. Pradeep Malhotra of Akbar who has in part sponsored and supported the meeting, FIA

initiatives including *Diwali Soup Kitchen* and *Dance Pe Chance*. FIA Executive team expressed their gratitude to Akbar Restaurant and their staff.

The evening reflected the spirit of camaraderie and a shared commitment across the board.



Mr. Kenny Desai, Mr. Ankur Vaidya, Padma Shri H.R. Shah addressing the crowd at the event (left to right)

Padma Shri Dr. Sudhir Parikh along with Mr. Kenny Desai



Mr. Srujal Parikh, Mr. Parveen Bansal, Dr. Pravin Pandhi, Mr. Bipin Patel addressing the crowd at the event (left to right)



Mr. Chandrakant Trivedi, Mr. Ram Gadhavi, Mr. Andy Bhatia addressing the crowd at the event (left to right)

Mr. Pradeep Malhotra of Akbar Restaurant with Mr. Kenny Desai



Mr. Vamsi Vasireddy, Mr. Avinash Gupta, Ms. Seema Jagtiani, Mr. Anurag Kumar addressing at the event (left to right)

**CONTINUES FROM PAGE 2**



*FIA Executive Committee Mr. Haresh Shah, Mr. Himanshu Bhatia, Mr. Kenny Desai, Mr. Saurin Parikh, Mr. Amit Ringasia, Mr. Mahesh Dubal (left to right)*



*The meeting observed a one-minute silence for Shaheed Diwas in respect to the martyrs of the nation*



*FIA Parade Council Meeting*

# FIA New England Celebrates Holi, the Festival of Colors



Photo: KV-Priyanka Jaiswal

**F**IA - New England organized an event to celebrate Holi - the vibrant festival of colors on March 20th, in Northborough, MA. Over 200 participants including community leaders from different faiths and cultures attended the event.

The event began with the welcome ceremony of the Radha Krishna idols on the swing - Courtesy Radha Krishna Temple. It was initiated by Secretary FIA-NE, Mr. Rakesh Kavari who welcomed the guests and spoke about the significance of Holi. "Let us forget and forgive, repair broken relationships, and celebrate Holi with great fervor and joy" he said.

The children from the community welcomed and honored the FIA volunteers who helped put up the magnificent Holi event.

The FIA-NE executive committee and members Mrs. Shova Sharma, Mr. Sanjay Gokhale along with Mr. Pankaj Adaval, Mr. Deepak Rathore, Mr. Gaurav Dixit, Mr. Deepak Sharma, Ms. Mukta Munjal, Mr. Anad Sharma, Mr. Ashwani Virmani, Ms. Kajal Dixit, Ms. Sunita Adava, Ms. Jyoti Singh, felicitated senior community members, including Dr. GN Misra, Ms. Bala Garg, Dr. Monie Malhotra with flowers and a shawl. The senior members loved the honor and respect they received on the auspicious occasion of Holi.

The celebrations also

witnessed some mesmerizing and energetic dance performances from well-acclaimed dance schools which were choreographed by Mr. Darshana Jani, Ms. Kalai Mangal, Ms. Sunita Ramnani. The highlight of the dance segment were the seniors, who performed with much grace and elegance on songs from the golden era of Indian Film music as the audience cheered and encouraged them. Members of the community also came forward to show their talent and sang some Holi numbers. Master of Ceremony Geena Virmani and Mukta Munjal kept the audiences engaged and enthralled throughout the program. The dance floor was opened to the public and they

danced with their friends and families to the foot tapping music played by DJ Ashok Gatumallu.

The guests, traditionally celebrating by smearing each other with colors, thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Covered with the vibrant colors of Holi from red, yellow to green and indigo, indulged in fun and frolic associated with the festival of color and love. The event breathed an atmosphere of social merriment which lasted till late evening. The food, drinks and the organic colors were sponsored by Kumars Restaurant, Northborough. The youth members of the FIA made the event possible with their hard work and commitment.

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Photo: KV-Priyanka Jaiswal



*FIA-NE executive committee at the celebration of the Holi event.*



*Radha Krishna idols were welcomed on the swing.*



*Children from the community danced and enjoyed the atmosphere.*



*The children from the community welcomed all the FIA volunteers who helped put up a magnificent Holi event.*

*Mr. Abhishek Singh president of FIA-NE.*



*The celebrations witnessed some mesmerizing and full of energy dance performances.*

# THE FORTNIGHT THAT WAS

Photo: thenationalbulletin



India abstains in the UNSC on a vote on a resolution by Russia on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Only Russia and China voted for the resolution and rest of the members also abstained.

The Taliban shut down schools for girls in Afghanistan hours after they reopened. The sudden move is likely to spark fresh concerns over girls' education in the country. Upon capturing power in the country, the Taliban had promised to 'protect' the rights of women, children and minorities.

Photo: scroll.in



Photo: english.jagran



In a historic gesture, Australia has returned 29 antiques to India. The artifacts which come from different time period dating back to 9-10 century CE, are primarily sculptures and paintings executed in variety of material such as sandstone, marble, bronze, brass and paper. PM Narendra Modi thanks Australia for the gesture.

An unarmed missile, the BrahMos, accidentally lands in Pakistan. The BrahMos missile was accidentally fired from an air base and landed inside Pakistan at a place called Mian Channu. The defence minister says that we need to strengthen our protocols.

Photo: indianexpress



Photo: indiaabroad



Indian Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu spoke at the State International Development Organization at their annual conference. He underlined the India-US partnership, including a strong connection with the US states.

Beijing has reached out to New Delhi to revive bilateral dialogue and set the stage for the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) summit in China later this year. China's ultimate and clear objective is to host Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the in-person BRICS summit, which will be attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin as well.



Photo: gulfnews



A China Eastern plane crashed after plunging from 20,00 ft. with 132 people on board. The recovery team has found the black box as well as the human remains at the crash site. The cockpit voice recorder is being analyzed.

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Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich's luxury jet is among 100 planes grounded by the US. The planes appear to have violated export rules imposed on Russia, following its war with Ukraine. Other aircraft grounded includes Boeing planes operated by Russian carriers.

Padma Shri Dr. Kiran Seth, founder of SPIC MACAY (Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture Amongst Youth) and Professor Emeritus of IIT Delhi, will embark on a 3-month Bycycle journey in October 22 from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. The object is to create awareness about the goals of SPICMACAY.



Photo: indiatoday



A court in the Indore district of Madhya Pradesh on Saturday sentenced six people, including Congress leader Digvijaya Singh, to one year's rigorous imprisonment in a case related to a clash with protesting workers of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) in 2011.

Two major movie theatre chain companies, PVR and Inox Leisure on Sunday (March 27th) received board of directors approval for the stock amalgamation of Inox with PVR. The merger will be carried out in a share exchange ("swap") ratio where 3 equity shares of PVR will be swapped for 10 equity shares of INOX. The amalgamation will bring a network of more than 1500 screens.

Photo: financialexpress



Photo: events.sulekha



The Gujarati NRIs organised an event in Atlanta, Georgia, on Sunday where folk singer Gitaben Rabari gave a performance to raise funds for the Ukrainians. The grand musical evening - called Lok Dayro - was met with an overwhelming response.

102-year-old Nandra Prusty was conferred the Padma Shri award by the Indian President Shri Ram Nath Kovind, for his contributions in the field of education. He has spent several decades of his life providing free education to children and adults in Odisha.



Will Smith slaps Chris Rock at the Oscars Ceremony in retaliation to the comment made on his wife Jada Pinkett Smith. The latter decided not to file charges. Later Will Smith issued a public apology.



AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV CELEBRATIONS  
38<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DANCE PE CHANCE



# THE OLDEST DANCE COMPETITION DANCE PE CHANCE is BACK



<https://dancepechance.org/event-registration-2022/>

**MAY.7.2022**  
 04:00 PM ONWARDS  
**PATRIOTS THEATER**  
 AT THE WAR MEMORIAL  
 1 MEMORIAL DRIVE,  
 TRENTON, NJ 08608

**CELEBRITIES**  
 TBA

**SIGN UP &  
 COMPETE TO WIN  
 BEST OF BEST PRIZE**  
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**SUPPORTERS**





# A GLIMPSE OF DANCE PE CHANCE



# SAVE THE DATE



**75**  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav

**HISTORY IN THE MAKING**

**THURSDAY**

**MAY**

**12**

**2022**

**11:30am to 4:30pm**



*Join FIA to commemorate & celebrate  
Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav - India's 75 years of Independence  
Historic Inaugural launch of World's Largest India Day Parade  
at Capitol Hill*

## PROGRAM INCLUDES:

- ◆ MEET & GREET US CONGRESS LAW MAKERS
- ◆ VIDEO ADDRESSES BY INDIA'S POLITICAL LEADERS
- ◆ ROUND TRIP TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE FROM NY & NJ
- ◆ FREE PARTICIPATION ◆ COMPLEMENTARY MEALS ◆ PERFORMANCES

MANDATORY RSVP REQUIRED BY MAY 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2022  
FOR MORE INFO. & RSVP: [INFO@FIANYNJCT.ORG](mailto:INFO@FIANYNJCT.ORG)  
PROOF OF VACCINATION REQUIRED



**FEDERATION OF INDIAN ASSOCIATIONS NY - NJ - NE**



# 'Russia Invades Ukraine - Aftermath'

- Russia says it will cut back military operations near Kyiv during peace talks.
- Western countries, including America, want to uninvite Russia from the G20 summit to be held this year in Bali. China says that Russia remains an important member.
- Volodymyr Zelensky said his government is carefully considering a Russian demand for Ukrainian neutrality, a key point of contention as negotiators for both sides prepare for a fresh round of talks this week that will aim to end the brutal month-long war.
- US President Joe Biden excoriated Vladimir Putin over the war in Ukraine, bluntly calling the Russian leader "a butcher" who "cannot remain in power". The Kremlin expressed alarm over the statement.
- Mira Rapp-Hooper, Director for the Indo-Pacific on the White House National Security Council, said that India's position at the United Nations over the crisis in Ukraine has been "unsatisfactory" but was also unsurprising given its historical relationship with Russia.
- Ukraine and Russia have agreed on two "humanitarian corridors" to evacuate civilians from frontline areas on Sunday, including allowing people to leave by private car from the southern city of Mariupol, Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said.
- In a statement, UNICEF said that one month of war in Ukraine has led to the displacement of 4.3 million children -- more than half of the country's estimated 7.5 million child population.
- Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a video appearance at Qatar's Doha Forum, calling on the energy-rich nation and others to increase their output of energy "so everyone in Russia understands that no one can use energy as blackmail".
- German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has said any false-flag operation by Russia in order to use chemical, nuclear or biological weapons would constitute a war crime.
- "From eyewitnesses, information is emerging that about 300 people died in the Drama Theatre of Mariupol following strikes by a Russian aircraft," Mariupol city hall wrote on Telegram.
- Indian Oil Corporation, buys three million barrels of Urals through Vitol for May delivery at a discount of \$20-\$25 a barrel to dated Brent.
- The United States plans to accept up to 100,000 Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion and is pledging \$1 billion in new humanitarian aid, the Biden administration.
- Ukraine's president urged his country's European "partners" to deploy 1% of all NATO aircraft, tanks and weapons for the country's defense.
- The United Kingdom proposed that the crippling sanctions on Russian entities and oligarchs, businesses, airlines, and private banks can be lifted if Russian forces halt the offensive inside Ukraine and withdraw all its troops, committing to end month-long aggression.
- Russia is planning to split Ukraine to create a "North and South Korea" the head of Ukraine's military intelligence has warned, vowing it would be met with guerrilla warfare in retaliation.

(news as of 29<sup>th</sup> March)

# Tourist / e-Tourist Visa Restored

**M**arch 17th, 2022. The Indian government restored the 10-year tourist and E-visa visas for the US nationals. E visas and regular paper visas have also been restored for 156 countries after they were discontinued in the wake of the COVID pandemic.

Officials said all currently valid old long-duration (10-year) regular tourist visas given to nationals of the US and Japan have been restored.

A fresh long-duration (10 year) tourist visa would also be issued to US and Japanese nationals.

The current scheme of regular Tourist visa/e-Tourist visa (one month stay only) on a gratis basis will also continue, according to the press release by the Indian Consulate General in New York.

New York-based social activist Prem Bhandari welcomed the decision saying this will tremendously ease travel for members of the diaspora, who had to face several difficulties and challenges due to the suspension

of the visas amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Bhandari, Jaipur Foot USA

issue of easing travel restrictions imposed amid the COVID-19 pandemic.



Chairman, has been taking up the cause of OCI card holders for the past several years and also the

The government has decided that a valid e-tourist visa issued for five years, which has been

suspended since March 2020, will be restored to the nationals of 156 countries, an official told PTI.

Nationals of these 156 countries will also be eligible for the issuance of a fresh e-tourist visa as per the Visa Manual, 2019.

Foreign nationals on tourist and e-tourist visas will be able to enter India only through designated Sea Immigration Check Posts (IPs) or Airport ICPs by flights, including those under the 'Vande Bharat Mission' or 'air bubble' scheme, or by any flights as allowed by the DGCA or Ministry of Civil Aviation.

In no case, foreign nationals will be allowed to enter through land borders or riverine routes on tourist visas or e-tourist visas.

The government instructions will not be applicable to Afghanistan nationals, who will continue to be governed by the separate instructions issued by the Union Home Ministry regarding the grant of the e-Emergency X-Misc visa, the official said.

## NEW FEATURE ANNOUNCEMENT

**In a first-of-its-kind initiative we are excited to provide our readers with a platform to share their stories.**

**Our subscribers are invited to submit their short fiction, poetry, prose, musings on any topic. Submissions, not exceeding 500 words, can be done at [editor@fianynjct.org](mailto:editor@fianynjct.org) along with a passport size image in jpeg format.**

**Stories submitted will be reviewed and published accordingly along with photograph of the contributor.**

**Non subscribers can also submit by subscribing at <https://fianynjct.org/subscribe-newsletter/>**

# "We Are Americans": Indian-American 'Dreamer' To United States Lawmakers

**A**n Indian-American documented dreamer has informed legislators that she is an American and aspires to be recognised as such so that she is not forced to leave the country in eight months due to the lack of serious legislative improvements in the immigration system that address the issue of ageing out children. Documented dreamers are children who come to the United States as dependents of their parents and who have legal permission to work in the United States, such as having an H-1B foreign work visa. These children lose their dependent status when they reach the age of 21.

"Without a change in eight months, I will be forced to leave, not only my home of 20 years but also my mom who is my only family left," Athulya Rajakumar, a 23-year-old recent graduate of the University of Texas at Austin from the Moody College of Communication, told members of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship and Border Safety on Tuesday.

Photo: shethepeople



Testifying before the subcommittee during a hearing on "Removing Barriers to Legal Migration," the Indian-American told the Senators that over 5,000 documented dreamers face this every year.

"We are Americans, and all we hope is to be recognised as that, to finally give meaning to the lives we have lived here so far. I hope you can improve the dream for all of us," Ms. Rajakumar said.

"I learned very young that every aspect of my life would be controlled by my status," she said.

"Erin, a nursing graduate was forced to self-deport last summer in the midst of a pandemic, a data analyst student was forced to self-deport two months ago, Summer will be forced to self-deport in four months, even though her family has legally resided here since she was a baby," she said.

Ms. Rajakumar, an aspiring journalist from Washington State, revealed her family's struggle through years of immigration uncertainty, which contributed to her brother's terrible death.

"I'm outraged by this broken system that you, your brother, and thousands of documented dreamers have had to face. We

organized this hearing today because we cannot allow the inaction of Congress to continue to cause this suffering," Senator Alex Padilla said in his remarks.

Mr. Padilla is chair of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship and Border Safety, Barriers to legal migration routinely separate families across international borders for years, he said.

"Visa caps that keep employers from expanding their businesses and hold back the US economy, an arbitrary cutoff for legal status that forced children, visa holders, to leave the only country they've ever known when they age out of their parents' visas. The gap between our country's needs and the realities of our broken immigration system should come as no surprise," Mr. Padilla said. According to the senator, currently, there's a backlog of 1.4 million people who are eligible for employment-based visas.

"Employment-based visas allow participating immigrants to bring extraordinary skills to our workforce, start new businesses, create new jobs in rural areas and to help address worker shortages in industries like health care," he added.

"But only 140,000 of these individuals can obtain visas every year. Because the spouses and children who accompany them count against the total, far fewer than 70,000 visas actually go to eligible workers. Hundreds of thousands of others are left in limbo, restricted by a temporary visa, or turned away from their dreams and they're kept from realising their potential," he said.

Ranking Member Senator John Cornyn said the Congressional Research Service recently estimated that without significant changes, the employment-based green card backlog could exceed 2 million by 2030.

Employment-based visas, also known as green cards, allow migrants to gain lawful permanent residence in the US in order to engage in skilled work.

"Indian nationals have been hit especially hard because our system's per-country caps do not

allow them to receive more than seven per cent of the available employment-based visas in any given year," he said.

"To make matters worse due to processing inefficiencies attributable in part to USCIS' paper-based system and to the closures of many of our consulates, we fail to issue as many as 92,000 employment-based visas in the height of the pandemic," he said.

Ms. Rajakumar told lawmakers that she got a full-time offer from a major news corporation in Houston, a top 10 market, but the same company who saw her potential withdrew their offer the second they heard about her visa status. "But worst of all, being considered an alien, an outsider in the only place you know to call home is a different kind of pain," she said.

Mr. Dip Patel, president of Improve The Dream, in a statement, said that Ms. Rajakumar's moving testimony shows the urgent need to update the broken system, including the need to permanently end the problem of aging for children who are raised and educated in the United States.

"For thousands of young people growing up with uncertainty, there is constant anxiety regarding one's future in what we consider our home. Delay in taking action will not only lead to tearing more families apart but also continue the immense emotional turmoil faced by thousands of families who contribute to our country and call America home. We urge Congress to consider this and act fast to pass common-sense immigration reform," he said.

During the hearing, Mr. Padilla questioned Ms. Rajakumar about her experience as a documented dreamer and how a pathway to citizenship and the enactment of America's Children Act would impact her life.

Ms. Rajakumar pointed to the fact that it would mean that she wouldn't have to be separated from her family and the country she's called her home for the last twenty years.

# Aurobindo to turn out lights at troubled New Jersey plant, putting 99 jobs on the chopping block

**A**n Aurobindo facility that received a scathing FDA rebuke some years ago is closing permanently.

On April 26th, Aurobindo Pharma, a subsidiary of the Indian generics company Aurobindo, will close its doors in Dayton, New Jersey, eliminating 99 jobs. The closure was described in a state Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification letter, which was originally reported by Stat News.

The business did not immediately reply to a request for comment from Fierce Pharma. Aurobindo did not explain why the factory was closing, nor did it

provide any possible options for employees facing layoffs.

The FDA was on the lookout for the Garden State facility as recently as October 2020, when it issued a warning letter for a slew of problems at the facility, including water leaks and impurity concerns connected to medication components for a generic antipsychotic treatment.

During an inspection between January and February of 2020, the FDA found multiple water leaks in Aurolife's packaging and encapsulation rooms, presaging potential contamination for a range of the company's drugs, the agency said.

The FDA pointed out

four instances in 2018 during which ceiling leaks in Aurolife's encapsulation room contaminated multiple batches of the generic anticonvulsant gabapentin, plus at least five other leaks in the company's packaging room. Some of those leaks were happening directly over Aurolife's packaging lines, which threatened the integrity of "moisture sensitive" drugs like diabetes med pioglitazone hydrochloride, which Aurolife had been producing on site, the FDA said at the time.

Aurobindo has recently had difficulty with the FDA at its factory in Hyderabad, India, where the business received

a warning letter following an inspection in August 2021.

In its January 2022 letter, the agency chided Aurobindo for failing to adequately investigate batch failures of active pharmaceutical ingredients as well as failing to evaluate the possible effect of changes on intermediates and APIs manufactured at the site.

The FDA flagged similar violations it brought to the company during a meeting with Aurobindo representatives in July 2019, adding that "repeated failures demonstrate that executive management oversight and control over the manufacture of drugs is inadequate.

# US President Biden names Dr. Ashish Jha as national coordinator of COVID-19 response

**A**n Indian-origin physician will carry out the United States' preparedness plan, manage ongoing risks.

Dr. Ashish Jha, an Indian-origin physician and public health specialist from Brown University, has been appointed the new White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator. Dr. Jha will replace Mr. Jeff Zeints, who has led the Biden administration's pandemic response thus far, the US President Joe Biden said in a statement on Thursday (March 17th).

"Dr. Jha is one of the leading public health experts in America, and a well-known figure to many Americans from his wise and calming public presence. And as we enter a new moment in the pandemic — executing on my National COVID-19 Preparedness

Plan and managing the ongoing risks from COVID — Dr. Jha is the perfect person for the job," Mr. Biden said. He also praised Mr. Zeints for his efforts in setting up the infrastructure to fight the pandemic. "He is a man of service and an expert manager," Mr. Biden said.

Dr. Jha, who is the Dean of the Brown University School of Public Health, has been a commentator with *The Hindu* and, since the pandemic began, appeared multiple times on Indian television. Dr. Jha has worked on Ebola and was a co-chair of a commission to tackle an outbreak of the disease in West Africa in 2014, according to a biography from Brown University.

Dr. Jha will take over the position at a time when almost a million Americans have died as a result of COVID-19. The United

States has recently seen a wave of the Omicron variant, while rumours of a novel subvariant BA.2 triggering pandemic surges in Europe is being attentively monitored. With three quarters of its population having received a single dose of the vaccine two years into the pandemic, the government is pivoting to a different method to treating COVID-19 as it shows indications of becoming endemic. "We still have

important work to do to protect Americans' lives and well-being," Dr. Jha said on *Twitter*, as he acknowledged that "a lot" of progress had been made already.

Photo: newsindiatimes



# Sonal Shah Appointed to Homeland Security Advisory Council

**US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas announces the addition of 33 new members to the Homeland Security Advisory Council, including Indian American Sonal Shah**

Photo: indiawest

**F**ormer Cabinet Secretaries from both Democratic and Republican administrations are among the new members of the Secretary's Advisory Council, as are CEOs from the technology, energy, transportation, financial, food and consumer products, and venture capital industries; executive leaders of national law enforcement organisations; and Presidents and CEOs of non-profit organisations dedicated to human rights, government

accountability, and community security. Ms. Shah worked as the National Policy Director for Mayor Pete Buttigieg's presidential campaign in 2020.

She is the Executive Vice President of Worldwide Network Operations for United Way Worldwide and the Founding President of The Asian American Foundation, the biggest philanthropic initiative to benefit the Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities.

Biden named Ms. Shah to

the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

Ms. Shah was born in Mumbai and migrated to the United States when she was four years old. She grew up in Houston, Texas, and graduated from the University of Chicago with a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Economics.



# US President Biden selects Indian-American as Ambassador to Morocco

**P**resident Biden named Mr. Puneet Talwar as Ambassador to Morocco on March 18th, 2022, according to the White House. Mr. Talwar will have to be cleared in US Senate hearings before taking on the post. President Biden recently announced the nomination of Shefali Razdan Duggal, a California Democratic activist and fundraiser, as ambassador to the Netherlands.

Mr. Talwar has worked in the State Department, the White House, and the United States Senate in senior national security and international policy roles. He presently works for the State Department as a Senior Advisor.

He has previously worked as an Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, a Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director at the National Security Council, and a Senior Professional Staff Member at the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Mr. Talwar has held critical positions in the United States House of Representatives and the State Department's Policy Planning Staff.

He's worked as a Senior Fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute, a Visiting Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania Penn Biden Center, a Counselor for the conflict resolution NGO Inter Mediate, and a non-resident Scholar at Georgetown University's Center for Security Studies outside of government.

Mr. Talwar oversaw several critical aspects of the US foreign policy as Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, including maintaining the State Department's global security relationships, providing international security assistance, negotiating international security agreements, and implementing the President's Export Control Reform Initiative.

Mr. Talwar worked in the White House National Security Council as a Special Assistant to President Obama and Senior Director for Iraq, Iran, and the Gulf States from 2009 until 2014.

His association with Biden goes back to the 1990s. From

1995 to 1999 and 2001 to 2008, he was the Chief Middle East Advisor to Biden on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He also served on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff

from 1999-2001, and was a foreign policy advisor in the House of Representatives.

Photo: manoramaonline



## SUBSCRIBERS' SECTION

# Letter to Shekhar Gupta @The Print : Apropos writings on the UP wall of March 5, 2022

**NEERAJ S**

**I**n your quest to start an anti-BJP (but albeit objective) digital portal, you have been mostly successful. However, the part that is not covered by this "mostly", really troubles. Case in point your recent musings on UP elections in this opinion piece referred to above.

You have oftentimes suggested the dire need to keep one's "bullshit detector/radar" switched on as a journalist, however, you forget your own advice when it comes to UP CM Yogi Adityanath. In fact, you become so blinded by your absolute disgust and hatred for him that you turn into the wholesale retailer and distributor of bullshit. This part of your life falls in the category of your work not as a journalist but as a political supariwala, tunnelling your way into the upper echelons of power in Lutyens Delhi for far too long without accountability; sometimes by flattering Sonia Gandhi in your *Walk the Talk* show with her (on NDTV) and on other occasions claiming something completely ludicrous like alleging that the chief of Indian Army (General VK Singh) was planning a coup.

Why else would a man, journalist and writer of your calibre not see any development in UP in the last five years? In this article itself, you invoke a success story (building of expressways in UP) by painting it in negative light with the image of roaming cattle on Purvanchal Expressway, while on the other hand you whitewash the

crimes of a gangster (Mukhtar Ansari) by juxtaposing his son (the champion sportstar, sharp-shooter and medal winner). Why else again would you, someone who has always maintained that in India most people are nationalistic by nature and most voters are basically smart, think that people are eating the cake of communalism in UP while the state goes to the dogs (which was the headline of a in a recent national interest article written by you (<https://theprint.in/national-interest/let-them-eat-communalism-why-yogi-formula-for-lack-of-jobs-income-self-esteem-is-a-big-risk/815633/>)).

UP has had a history of misgovernance, something which cannot be wiped away in the single term of any CM. That historical fact has to be borne in mind before making any further assessments (biased or objective) and jumping to conclusions. However, in spite of the massive historical odds against him, Yogi Adityanath has delivered on many fronts simultaneously. I will here not bring in the reconstruction of temples, temple corridors or any religious places (which are activities that generate employment and tourism along with improving the face of a holy city or town) but even if we keep those out to appease the so-called "secular" media of India, the developmental work in UP speaks volumes. Construction of Purvanchal, Gorakhpur Link, Bundelkhand and Ganga Expressways alone has silently changed the face of UP (something acknowledged by even one of your own reporters in an article

recently ([theprint.in/india/governance/in-yogis-up-expressways-are-scripting-silent-transformation-in-state-known-for-poor-road-infra/638384/](https://theprint.in/india/governance/in-yogis-up-expressways-are-scripting-silent-transformation-in-state-known-for-poor-road-infra/638384/)). Not to mention the employment generated by these projects. You yourself had complained of a bone-jangling journey from Lucknow to Gorakhpur during your travels with NDTV crew in run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. I thought that at least you would tell the truth about road infrastructure development in UP. From the construction of international airports in Kushinagar (already open) and Jevar in Noida (under construction) to the trial run of the first of Kanpur metro train (completed ahead of schedule even during Covid) and the construction and inauguration of AIIMS Gorakhpur, the list is long. I am deliberately not counting here the AIIMS in Rae Bareilly, although it too was speeded up and completed by the Yogi government because it was approved by Dr. Manmohan Singh during the tenure of CM Akhilesh Yadav. From modest medical facilities (only 17 medical colleges and hospitals in UP total when Yogi came to power), the Yogi government has launched a program to open one medical college and hospital in every district of UP with public-private partnership.

Some of those colleges are already open and functioning. Over 590 new oxygen generation plants have been installed in UP in the last year alone to make sure no oxygen shortage occurs in case of a third wave of Covid

and an oxygen concentrator unit has been installed in every hospital of UP (existing and/or upcoming). Yogi had campaigned for the reopening of the Gorakhpur Fertilizer Plant which had remained shut for 30 years ever since he was first elected an MP from Gorakhpur. That plant too was reopened with his efforts and recently inaugurated by the PM. A defense corridor is under construction and so is a proposed film-city. The AK-203 rifle manufacturing plant in Korva in Amethi district I believe is already functional.

As a case study, I would recommend that you and your staff take a look at the BRD Medical College and Hospital in Gorakhpur (BRDMCHG). You may not have ever visited BRDMCHG before Yogi came to power, but you must go and see it for yourself now. Ask the locals about the transformation that has taken place in this hospital. This particular hospital saw the most deaths of children anywhere in India every year due to brain fever and Japanese encephalitis. 4-5 kids per bed were a common sight there and those wards where these children were overflowing barely had a working fan during the height of summer. Now there is a sea-change in conditions, with every child having his/her own bed and the entire children's ward being centrally air-conditioned. The deaths of children every year in that district and BRDMCHG have been reduced by over 99 per cent.

I may have missed some

**CONTINUE ON PAGE 17**



**CONTINUES FROM PAGE 16**

highlights and although a lot has been accomplished, much more remains to be done in what is India's largest state by population. However, these efforts must be presented dispassionately. I ask you, what would have been your reportage like, had all this been accomplished by a "secular" darling of the leftist liberal media, say Rahul Gandhi? When you look at Yogi, do you see nothing but communalism! In your article you completely brushed aside the numerous illegal slaughterhouses operated by

a particular community. You also conveniently forgot to lay before your reader the crime statistics of UP; which show violent criminal behaviour much more prevalent in the same community (as a percentage of population). You are a world-renowned journalist; you knew about these inconvenient facts of UP's and India's demography (and more) but chose to remain silent about them. New words are being invented to blunt the impact of the sheer electoral mandate given to Modi and Yogi.

When I was growing up in India (currently I am settled

in the US), we used to hear words like "majority" and "popular" with regards to elected governments. When it comes to Modi, Shah and Yogi those very same words have been replaced with "majoritarianism" and "populist" respectively by you and others like you who claim to be "secular". Which is why with a heavy heart I had to recently cancel my subscription to *The Print*. Your digital platform is veering more and more in service of leftist liberal (and so-called "progressive") ideology at the expense of objectivity.

You were always biased

(nothing wrong with that) but at least you were fair in your journalism, unfortunately not any more. I grew up reading your brilliant articles in *The Indian Express* and *India Today* during terrorist violence marred dark days of Punjab of the 1980s and 1990s, which makes me wonder my good Sir, if it's you who has had too much of the "secularism" cake to eat. Forgive me for venting so freely, but I hope you and *The Print* wake up to the new political reality of India and smell the coffee of change being brewed by its common man.

# The Kashmir Files Buzz



**SRISHTI NARULA**

Filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri's *"The Kashmir Files,"* based on the genocide of the Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley in the 1990s, has evoked an unprecedented response and has been successful in making the citizens of India unite and support the Pandit's cause. The film is playing to packed houses in India and many other countries, including the USA.

Even before the film was commercially released, citations were issued for the film's premier in the House of Representatives in Connecticut. The approximately three-hour film was edited into a 20-minute screener for impact screenings in cities across the United States.

As it crosses the Rs 200 crore mark, it has created quite a buzz and there have been different reactions to the film since it showcases the sheer brutality and the trauma that the Kashmiri Pandits had to suffer, the fact that the event was underplayed in the media and the insensitivity of the bureaucrats and the ruling elite.

Such narratives are bound to be challenged by a few segments of society, who will interpret them in accordance with their political ideologies. There are some who say that the events are either fictional or have been overly dramatized, and some who say that it has the dangerous potential of further widening the rifts between the two communities in India. Most of the audience have come out in support of the film as it seems to have touched a chord with them. People

who were ignorant have been made aware of the trauma and now empathise with the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits.

Unfortunately, the majority of the debates raging in the media are more focused on the blame game, and most of the TV channels are serving drama in the name of journalism.

As put by William James, "Acceptance of what has happened is the first step to overcoming the consequences of any misfortune." The film has brought to celluloid the hidden and lacerating wounds of the past 32 years for the Kashmiri Pandits, and now all

efforts should be concentrated on the resettlement and rehabilitation of the Pandits in the Valley. Their demand for Panun Kashmir-an area or district in the Kashmir Valley where they can all settle without fear and revalidate their culture and identity-should be the prime focus.

Once we are able to do that, only then can the real catharsis happen.

It is high time that the issue should be focused on the resettlement and rehabilitation of the Kashmiri Pandits.



Photo: thenewsminute

# EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR FIA MEMBERS

This year, FIA has partnered with the India Business Conference organised by the Columbia Business School in New York. It is an annual India-focused Business Conference. In its 17th edition, this year's theme "Limitless in India" inspires thought-leadership and generates discussions around the business, social, political, and creative undercurrents that permeate Indian life.

There will be 30+ speakers across several sessions to discuss and ideate India's drive towards self-reliance, as it positions itself in a post-COVID-19 world. The conference brings together such voices at the forefront as they share their stories, who challenged conventional wisdom and provided insights into the future they are writing about – the future of a "new" India.

The conference has a small attendance fee, which has been waived off for FIA members and subscribers — it comes free. Please register at [www.tinyurl.com/columbia-ibc](http://www.tinyurl.com/columbia-ibc) by using the code **FIA FRIENDS**.

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| <p><b>Sonali Misra</b><br/>VP &amp; HR Head, Bain &amp; Co. India</p>                    | <p><b>Rohit Chennamaneni</b><br/>Co-Founder, DarwinBox</p> | <p><b>Rohit Prasad</b><br/>SVP &amp; Head Scientist, Alexa</p> | <p><b>Aakrit Vaish</b><br/>Co-Founder &amp; CEO, Jio Haptik</p> | <p><b>Naveen Kasturia</b><br/>Actor (TVF, Runaway Lugai)</p>          | <p><b>Shanta Gupta</b><br/>CHRO, SunPharma (SPARC)</p>              |
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...and many others!

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CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

# April 1

Friday

# April 2

Saturday

8:15-8:30 AM ET | 5:30-6:00 PM IST

**Registration - Day 1 and Welcome Remarks**

7:45-8:00 AM ET | 5:15-5:30 PM IST

**Registration - Day 2 and Welcome Remarks**

8:30-9:30 AM ET | 6:00-7:00 PM IST

Keynote

**The Rise of FinTech – SBI's Strategy**

Fireside Chat with **Ashwini Tewari**, Managing Director, State Bank of India; moderated by **Sumit Maniyar**, Founder & CEO, Rupeek

8:00-9:00 AM ET | 5:30-6:30 PM IST

**Policy Reforms to Propel India to the next phase of growth**

Panel discussion with:

- **Swapan Dasgupta** (Padma Bhushan, Parliamentarian)
- **Rajeev Topno** (World Bank Group, IAS, Ex-PMO)
- **Bharat Lal** (IAS, Jal Jeevan Mission Director)

10:30-11:30 AM ET | 8:00-9:00 PM IST

Keynote

**Arvind Krishna – Fireside chat**

Fireside Chat with the Chairman & CEO of IBM Global; moderated by **Prof. Medini Singh**, Columbia Business School

9:00-10:00 AM ET | 6:30-7:30 PM IST

**Building Global Tech Start-ups**

Panel discussion with:

- **Harsh Jain** (Co-founder, Dream 11)
- **Aakrit Vaish** (Co-founder and CEO, Jio Haptik)
- **Yamini Bhat** (Co-founder and CEO, Vymo)
- **Rohit Chennamaneni** (Co-founder, Darwinbox)

11:30-12:30 PM ET | 9:00-10:00 PM IST

**Clean Energy Transition: Mission 2030**

Panel discussion with:

- **Aniruddha Kumar** (Ex-Additional Secretary, MNRE)
- **Jagabanta Ningthoujam** (Principal, RMI)
- **Dr. Rahul Walawalkar** (Head, IESA)
- **Gireesh Shrimali** (Head, University of Oxford)

10:00-11:00 AM ET | 7:30-8:30 PM IST

**Financing New Growth Opportunities**

Panel discussion with:

- **Amitabh Kant** (CEO, NITI Aayog)
- **Manoj Kohli** (Country head, Softbank India)
- **Bharat Kaushal '98** (MD, Hitachi India)

10:30-12:00 PM ET | 8:00-9:30 PM IST

**Future of Work: Managing Human Capital**

Panel discussion with:

- **Krish Shankar** (CHRO, Infosys)
- **Shanta Gupta** (CHRO, SunPharmaceuticals)
- **Krishna Raghavan** (CHRO, Flipkart)
- **Sonali Misra** (HR Head & VP, Bain & Co. India)
- **Prof. Chandrasekhar Sripada** (Professor, ISB)

11:30-12:30 PM ET | 9:00-10:00 PM IST

Keynote

**Women Powering India's Growth**

Fireside Chat with **Smt. Smriti Irani**, Union Minister of Women and Child Development, Gov of India

11:30-12:30 PM ET | 9:00-10:00 PM IST

**OTT: Redefining Entertainment in India**

Panel discussion with:

- **Pratik Gandhi** (Actor, Scam 1992, Bhavai)
- **Naveen Kasturia** (Actor, Aspirants, Pitchers)
- **Aditi Shrivastava** (CEO, Pocket Aces)
- **Dhawal Gusain** (Ex-CEO, TVF)
- **Sidharth Shakhder** (EVP, Hotstar)

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# Shree Saini, First Runner-Up for Miss World 2021

**2021 Miss World America, Shree Saini, who is an Indian-American, was named first runner-up in the Miss World 2021, on 17 March 2022 at Coca-Cola Music Hall in San Juan, Puerto Rico**

**T**he beauty queen, a heart health advocate, has had a permanent pacemaker since the age of 12 and is also a burn survivor after a serious auto accident left her with scars all over her face. Saini was hospitalized after collapsing on stage during the Miss World America grand finals in 2019. She, on the other hand, never allowed her disability to prevent her from pursuing her aspirations.

Shree, who has a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism, is presently employed as a Business Manager at her father's firm and as a Keynote Speaker. Shree has been highly active in promoting BWAP in the US and throughout the main media channels since being crowned. Her ambition is to become the Secretary of

Education for the United States. Shree is a voracious reader who also appreciates dance and musical theatre, as well as stand-up comedy.

While participating in Miss World, she had shared a photo of hers in a sari and wrote a caption saying, "Namaste world. I am 100 per cent American. I am 100 per cent Indian. I am 100 per cent a world Citizen. There's a reason why God made me Indian-America. I honor every part of myself. In every room I walk into, I'll proudly come with both of my identities. I was born in India and raised in America all of my life, for 20-plus years.

Now, I am the first Indian-American to represent the United States at Miss World. I represent immigrants,

333 million Americans my

heritage that includes billions of Indians all around the world. I represent the voice of a united world. Let us all be truly inclusive.

Only by including people who come from all different cultures, we are able to learn from each other and grow." *Photo: siasat*



# 94th Academy Awards

**T**he 94th Academy Awards were held in person for the first time since the pandemic began on March 27 (2020) at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

The *Power of the Dog* earned 12 nominations. Close behind was *Dune* with 10, and *Belfast* and *West Side Story* tied with seven apiece. *King Richard* scored six nominations.

The awards ran into controversy long before they even began, when it was announced in February that eight awards would be presented off air to shorten the broadcast and allow more



time for scripted bits and musical numbers. Further controversy ensued at the event itself when Will Smith slapped Chris Rock after the latter made a comment on the shaved head of Jada Pinkett Smith, wife of Will Smith.

The winners of Oscars 2022: Best Film- *CODA*, Best Actor - Will Smith for *King Richard*, Best Actress - Jessica Chastain for *The Eyes of Tammy Faye*, Best director: *The Power of the Dog* - Jane Campion, Best original song: *No Time To Die* - *No Time to Die*; Music and Lyric by Billie Eilish and Finneas O'Connell, Best animated feature: *Encanto*.



*"CODA" won the Oscar for best picture*



*Jessica Chastain won the best actress award*



*Billie Eilish and Finneas won the best original song award*



*Will Smith won the best actor award*

# Kareena Kapoor Khan makes her OTT Debut with Netflix-Sujoy Ghosh film

Photo: theprint

**B**ased on Keigo Higashino's global bestseller *The Devotion of Suspect X*, Netflix confirmed the casting of Jaideep Ahlawat, Vijay Varma, and Kareena Kapoor Khan in an unnamed thriller. Sujoy Ghosh, the filmmaker behind thrillers such as *Kahaani* and *Badla*, will direct this murder mystery. The film was announced by Netflix via an interesting video of Kareena Kapoor Khan, Jaideep Ahlawat, and Vijay Varma at a script-reading session for the film conducted by the director.

Talking about his film, Sujoy said, "Devotion... is probably the best love story I've ever read, and to get a chance to adapt it into a

film is such an honor. Plus, I get a chance to work with Kareena, Jaideep and Vijay—what more can one ask for?"

Sharing her thoughts, Kareena Kapoor Khan added, "I can't wait to begin work on this exciting project. It has all the right ingredients — a great story, a visionary director and a super-talented cast and crew, I'm really looking forward to working with Sujoy, Jaideep and Vijay. It's the beginning of a new, electrifying journey and I can't wait for audiences worldwide to see this global bestseller book come to life."

Pratiksha Rao, Director, Films and Licensing, Netflix India, said, "Our members love engaging



with new thrillers — be it for the suspense, the twists or the unexpectedness of what happens next. Thrillers are integral to our Indian film slate and we can't wait to bring to our members our

adaptation of the bestseller, *The Devotion of Suspect X*. This film brings together an incredible cast along with a phenomenal creative and production team."

# Randeep Hooda to play Veer Savarkar in Mahesh Manjrekar directorial

**2**1 years after Marathi music icon Sudhir Phadke created the hard-hitting Hindi biopic on Veer Savarkar (the first-ever crowd-funded film in India!), Savarkar, Randeep Hooda takes on the role of the liberation warrior and visionary in *Swatantra Veer Savarkar*. Shailendra Gaur, a stage actor, had played the title part at the time. However, due to political manoeuvrings, the film could only be distributed in Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir, and nowhere else.

Producer Sandeep Singh feels, "Considering Veer Savarkar is one of the most controversial characters from Indian history, I could only think of Randeep to play him. Veer Savarkar's contribution cannot be ignored.

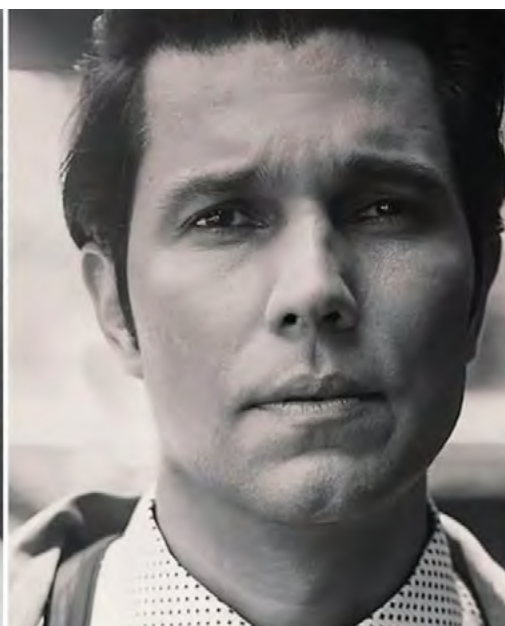
I wonder why our history books never mentioned Veer Savarkar."

Sandeep is, of course, off the mark here: Savarkar is mentioned in history books, but justice has never been done to this visionary who fought also for equal rights

of Harijans (untouchables), and whose dictum was that all Indians were Indians first and last and their religions were something that they followed only at home!

Director Mahesh chipped in,

Photo: hindisip



"This is the right time to tell the stories which we had ignored. *Swatantra Veer Savarkar* will be an edgy cinematic narrative that will force us to revisit our history." The director has been working on this subject for almost a year with his research team.

Randeep feels elated that he has been chosen to play the most influential yet underestimated hero of India's freedom movement. "There are many heroes that have played their part in getting us our independence. However, not everyone has got their due. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar is the most misunderstood, debated and influential of these unsung heroes and his story must be told. I am delighted to collaborate with Sandeep after *Sarabjit*. It will be yet another challenging role to portray."

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