

DIASPORA BI-WEEKLY

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FIA Shines Through the Pandemic With Its Philanthropic Efforts



Remembering Bharat Ratna Sardar Patel on his 145th Birthday



Texas Teen Anika Chebrolu is America's Top Young Scientist for Discovering a Potential Therapy for COVID-19

FIA Shines Through the Pandemic With Its Philanthropic Efforts More Than 7,000 Meals Served for Community Assistance



Diwali soup kitchen in Westbury, New York.



Diwali soup kitchen Norwalk, Connecticut.

EDISON, New Jersey: The Federation of Indian Associations of NY, NJ, CT, officially launched its very first "Diwali Soup Kitchen - Spreading Lights of Happiness." The FIA initiative is a complimentary meal provision to tri-state recognized soup kitchens who serve meals to those in need.

FIA is cognizant of the fact that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for soup kitchen meals has increased significantly. Over 4000 meals prepared in commercial and certified facilities will be delivered at seven accredited soup kitchen locations in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut. The meal drive, which started from Oct. 21, will run through Nov. 7, covering various parts of the states and includes supporters, sponsors, and government officials, as well as the



Eva's Kitchen in Paterson, New Jersey.

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Consulate General of India in New York, participating at scheduled locations.

FIA President Anil Bansal, along with his executive team – Executive Vice President Himan Bhatia, Vice President Saurin Parikh, General Secretary Parveen Bansal, Treasurer Amit Ringasia, and Miki Patel, Amit Yadav, Haresh Shah, were in attendance during the launch event. President Bansal, who gave the organizational activities report summary, noted that this food drive builds on FIA’s decades of community service, including assisting those in need during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. FIA also served over 3000 meals in April and May. Now, with the Diwali Soup Kitchen, FIA is continuing to serve the tri-state community during the auspicious time of the festival of lights.



FIA President Anil Bansal, South Marie, FIA Executive Vice President Himanshu Bhatia and Shatrughna Sinha, Deputy Consul General of India in New York.



Eva’s Kitchen in Paterson, New Jersey.



Trenton Soup Kitchen in New Jersey



Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Ankur Vaidya, along with senior advisors Padma Shri H.R. Shah, Padma Shri Sudhir Parikh, Vice Chairman Bipin Patel, General Secretary Jayesh Patel, and Trustees Andy Bhatia, Srujal Parikh, Dr. Pravin Pandhi, Anand Patel and Mahesh Dubbal, along with members of the community, have pledged to sponsor and assist in the delivery of these meals.



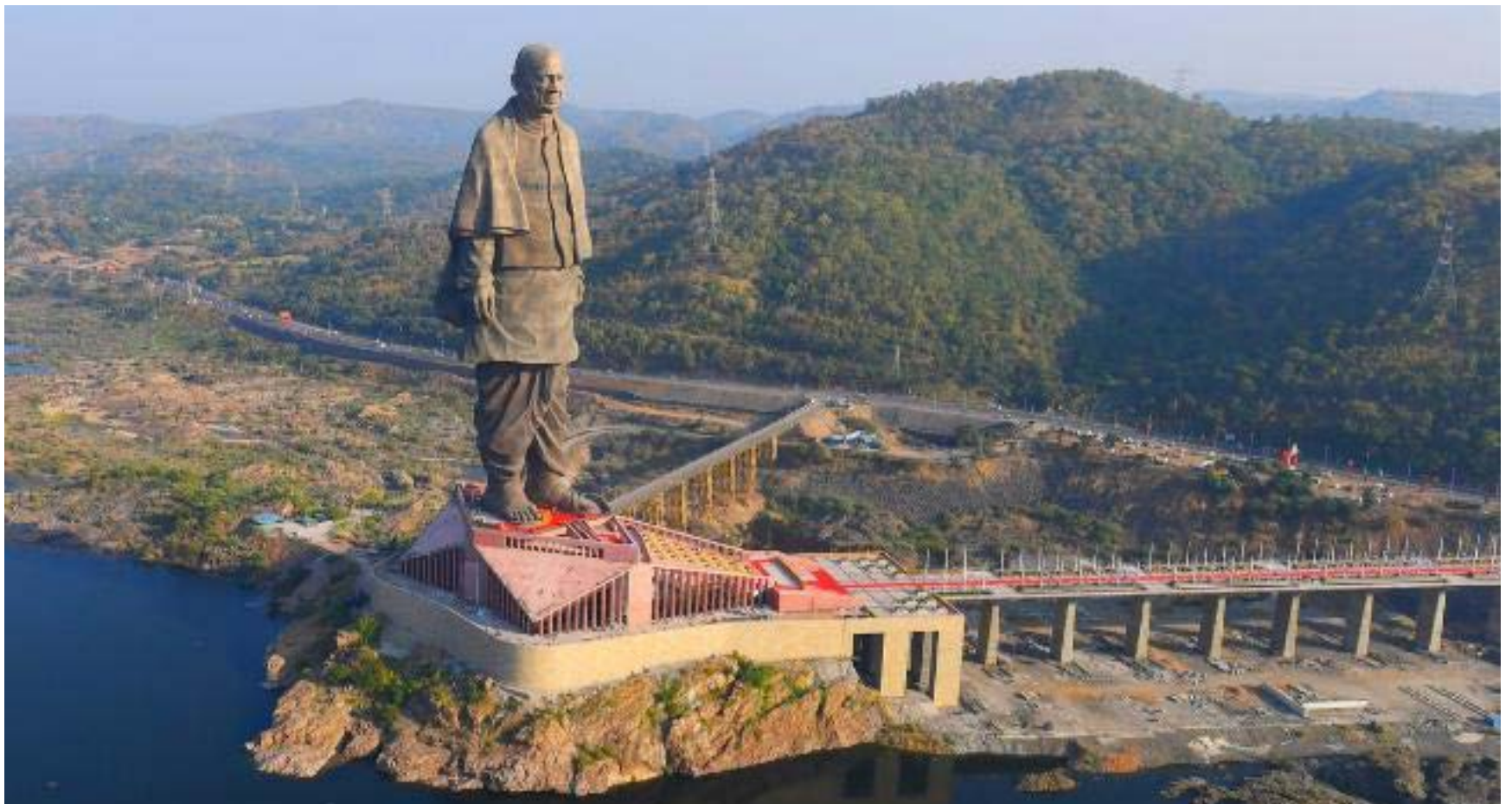
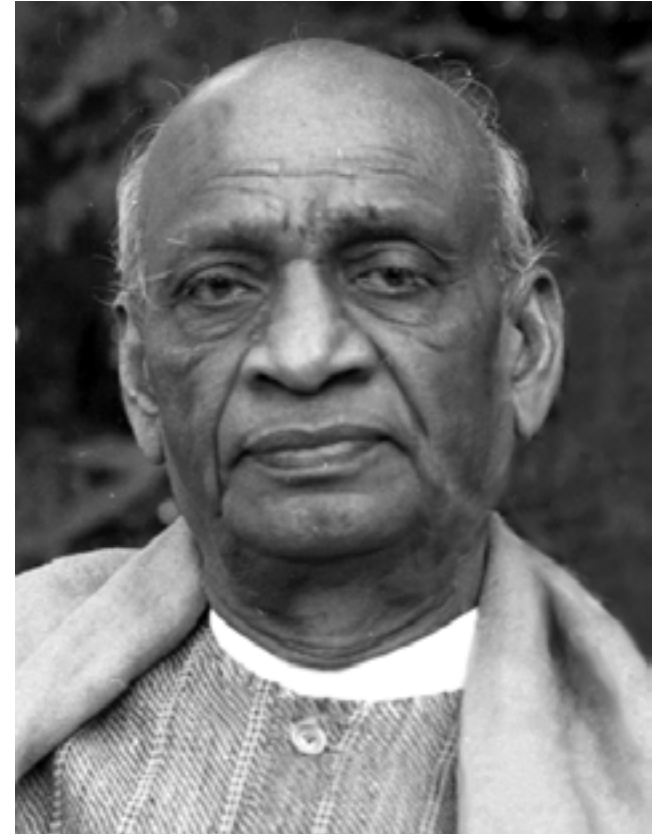
Throughout the the COVID-19 pandemic, FIA has been actively engaged with the community, assisting services which include meals to our front line heroes in New York and New Jersey, emergency travel and accommodation facilitation in association with the Consulate General of India in New York and Air India, assistance for seniors impacted by Covid among other activities. FIA has also been recognized by the Brooklyn borough president for its active participation and support with the community service activities held in the greater New York area.

Remembering Bharat Ratna Sardar Patel on his 145th Birthday

By Chandrakant Trivedi

The Federation of Indian Associations of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut (FIA-Tristate) joins the global Indian community in fondly remembering freedom fighter and administrator, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on his 145th birth anniversary. Patel was India's first deputy prime minister.

Born on Oct. 31, 1875, in Nadiad Gujarat as one of six children in the family of Jawarbhai Patel, Sardar Patel's incredible brilliance, statesmanship and diplomacy, made him one of the greatest freedom fighters, leader and administrator par excellence. It was Sardar Patel who was the chief architect of modern India and was instrumental in the successful integration of the 565 self-governing princes states into the Indian federation, thus foiling the plan of the British.



Sardar Patel, a barrister by profession, was practicing law until he came in contact with Mahatma Gandhi in late 1916. He led many agitations and movements against the British regime. He was the president of the All India Congress. His contribution to India's freedom struggle is well-known.

He was married to Jhaverba Patel and the couple had two children - daughter Maniben and son Dhayabhai. Jhaverba passed away in 1909, but he never remarried.

Sardar Patel had tremendous support within the Congress Party to become the prime minister of India, but at the request of Gandhiji, he let go the position, and accepted the post of deputy prime ministership. He held that post until he died on Dec. 15, 1950 in Bombay.

To honor Sardar Patel, Prime Minister Narendra Modi built a 600 feet tall statue which was inaugurated on Oct. 31, 2018. It stands tall atop Sadhu Bet island on the Narmada river, facing the Sardar Sarovar Dam downstream in Kevadiya colony, about 60 miles southeast of Vadodara.

A statue of Sardar Patel has also been installed on the premises of New Jersey's Royal Albert's Palace in Fords, by FIA's very own Albert Jassani. A well-known community leader and past president of FIA, Jassani is currently a member of the Board of Trustees.

Texas Teen Anika Chebrolu is America's Top Young Scientist for Discovering a Potential Therapy for COVID-19

Anika Chebrolu, a 14-year-old student from Frisco, Texas, has won the 2020 3M Young Scientist Challenge, an annual innovation competition hosted in partnership with Discovery Education.

She used in-silico methodology for drug discovery to find a molecule that can selectively bind to the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus to find a cure for COVID-19. The teen's coveted prize includes the 'America's Top Young Scientist' title, a \$25,000 cash prize, and a one-of-a-kind destination trip. The freshman at Independence High School freshman competed against nine other finalists.

Laasya Acharya, a seventh-grader at Mason Middle School in Mason City School District from Mason, Ohio, won third place for utilizing a neural network to detect crop diseases through image analysis.

Chebrolu told CNN that her original goal was to identify a lead compound that could bind to a protein of the influenza virus to develop a novel anti-influenza drug. But she switched gears when the COVID-19 pandemic quickly spread across the globe. "Because of the immense severity of the COVID-19 pandemic and the drastic impact it had made on the world in such a short time, I, with the help of my mentor, changed directions to target the SARS-CoV-2 virus," said the the young scientist aspiring to be medical researcher and professor.

One of the reasons Chebrolu entered the competition was her interest in science from childhood. "I have always been amazed by science experiments since my childhood and I was drawn towards finding effective cures for Influenza disease after a severe bout of the infection last year," she told CNN. "I would like to learn more from 3M scientists to pursue my drug development and with their help, would like to conduct in-vitro and in-vivo testing of my lead drug candidate."

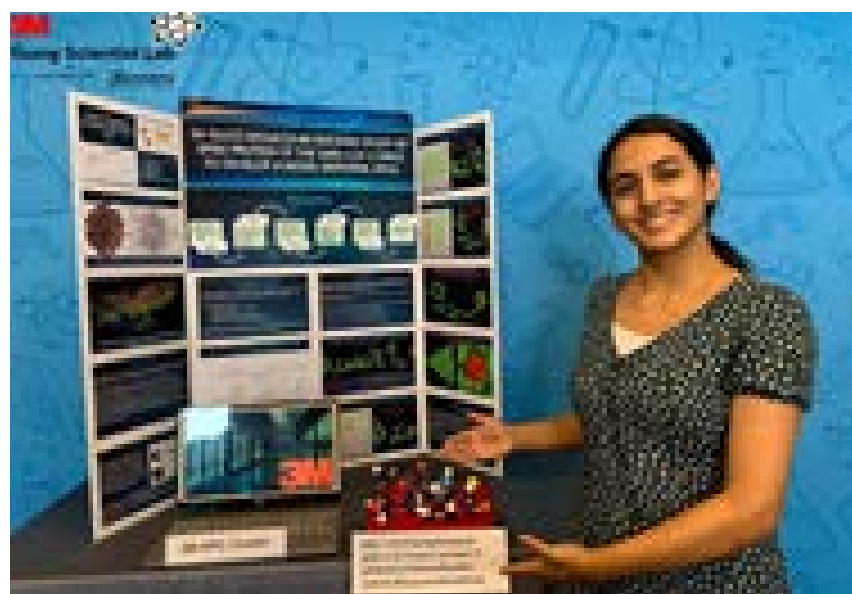
In her study, Chebrolu discovered a molecule that can selectively bind to the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2. Binding and inhibiting this viral protein would potentially stop the virus' entry into the cell, creating a viable drug target. In her research, She screened millions of small molecules for drug- likeness properties, ADMET properties and binding affinities against the spike protein using numerous software tools. The one molecule with the best pharmacological and biological activity towards the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus was chosen as the lead molecule that can be a potential drug for the effective treatment of COVID-19.

Chebrolu began work on her project last school year when she was an eighth grader at Nelson Middle School.

"I am extremely humbled at being selected America's Top Young Scientist as all of the finalists had amazing projects and were extremely well-rounded individuals," Chebrolu said in a press release issued by her high school. "Science is the basis of life and the entire universe and we have a long way to go understand it fully."

The SARS-CoV-2 virus is the cause of hundreds of thousands of deaths worldwide and was declared a worldwide pandemic and public health emergency earlier this year. With the virus continuing to spread far and wide, there is an urgent need to find an effective anti-coronavirus drug.

Several Indian Americans were among winners of the competition in fourth through tenth place. They receive a \$1,000 prize and a \$500 excitations gift card. They include:



Rithvik Ijju of Englewood, Colorado, an eighth-grader at Challenge School in the Cherry Creek School District 5.

Ekansh Mittal from Beaverton, Oregon, an eighth-grader at Meadow Park Middle School in the Beaverton School District.

Harsha Pillarisetti of San Ramon, California, an eighth-grader at Windemere Ranch Middle School in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District.

Samhita Pokkunuri from Old Bridge, New Jersey, a seventh-grader at Carl Sandburg Middle School in the Old Bridge Township Public School District.

Samvrit Rao of Ashburn, Virginia, a seventh-grader at Stone Hill Middle School in the Loudoun County Public School District.

The FIA congratulates Chebrolu and all the winners for their accomplishments.

HYDERABAD, TELANGANA IS CURRENTLY REELING FROM ONE OF THE WORST FLOODING DISASTERS IN ITS HISTORY AND IS IN NEED OF IMMEDIATE HELP

It's never a bad time to help those who are in need.

Hyderabad, India Flood Relief



Show your support by going to this linkgf.me/u/y5j6dk

If you have questions, just call 201-450-2818

FIA Urges the Community to Vote in Large Numbers for the Nov. 3 Elections

By Chandrakant Trivedi

The United States, in spite of the still grave impact of the devastating pandemic, is gearing up for the historic general election, for electing the president, vice president and several U.S. senators (6-year term), members of the House of Representatives (2-year term), as well as state and local representatives, on Nov. 3. Elections are currently underway. More than 40 million Americans have already cast their general election ballots, according to a survey of election officials by CNN, Edison Research, and Catalist. Pre-election data reveals that voters in the 47 states and Washington, D.C., are already setting records as they seek to cast their ballots either by mail or in-person where available less than two weeks before Election Day. Ballots cast so far represents almost 30 percent of the more than 136 million total ballots cast in the 2016 presidential election.



In any democracy, voting is the most-powerful, prominent tool for the citizens to elect person(s), politically or otherwise, to favor issues of their choice to control and guide future systematic proceedings.

The election of the president and the vice president of the U.S. is an indirect election, in which citizens who are registered to vote in one of the 50 states or in Washington, D.C., cast their ballots, not directly for those two offices, but instead for members of the electoral college. These electors then cast direct votes, known as electoral votes, for the president and the vice president. The candidate who receives an absolute majority of electoral votes (at least 270 out of the 538), is then elected to the office.

The electoral college and its procedure are established in the U.S. Constitution by Article II, Section 1, clauses 2 and 4. This is irrespective of popular votes received by the presidential candidate.

The Federation of Indian Associations of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut (FIA-Tristate), takes this opportunity to appeal to all eligible voters to cast their valuable votes to the party and candidates of their choice and to express their opinion publicly.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the voting system is somewhat complex, as some states are preferring casting the votes by mail-in ballots, though the option of casting the vote by visiting a designated polling booth is also available. As a result of this, it's being speculated that the counting of votes will take a substantial time, delaying the results.

However, we urge each and every voter to exercise their voting rights and ensure that ultimately, democracy wins.

After 1965, when President John. F. Kennedy broadened the Immigrant Visa Policy, there has been a rapid growth in the Indian American community. Currently, there are over 4.5 million Indian Americans in the U.S. An estimated 1.8 million among them are eligible to vote in this election.

This is indeed a significant number which could make an impact on the outcome of the result. However, many among our community are reluctant to register and to vote. This in turn deprives us of our rightful place and recognition as a community, which is known to be well-off and highly educated and resourceful, with representation in all fields and sectors, including politics.

We are also proud of Bobby Jindal, who served two terms as the governor of Louisiana, as well as of Nikki Haley, who served as the governor of South Carolina, and as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.

Similarly, there are many Indian Americans who are elected or are running for elections at various state and local levels. It is gratifying to note here that for the past 25 years, several Indian Americans have served in various positions at federal, state and local administrations, irrespective of party affiliations.

Recreational Marijuana Concern - NJ Families & Children - Question 1 NJ Ballot 2020

URGENT - 8 DAYS LEFT TO TURN IN NJ BALLOTS

Dear Executive Committee Members:

The Indian American community should be aware of a specific dangerous public health and safety issue that is facing all NJ families and children right now - the issue of "legalization of personal use cannabis" that is Question 1 on the NJ Nov 2020 Ballot. I am contacting you to ask for your help in educating your NJ members on the very serious aspects associated with this Referendum. Every NJ resident will suffer even as innocent bystanders, due to increased impaired drivers on our very congested NJ roads, increased auto and health insurance rates, more adults - and children - using these extremely potent and addictive THC products, taxpayer burdens and increased crime just to name a few of the extremely serious consequences that will affect all NJ families if concerned residents do not Vote No.

Unfortunately most people do not realize that Ballot Question 1 "legalization of personal use cannabis" is really about privately owned commercial potshops selling recreational weed products including edibles such as THC sodas and THC candies, along with vapes and smokes. They do not realize the potentially devastating effects "legalizing" today's high-potency THC pot products would have for all NJ families and children if we allow this to be voted through. It is important to note the ballot does not address decriminalization and it is not the medical pot.

No doubt you recognize that putting anymore drugs into NJ communities certainly is not the answer to social justice problems, but I also want to provide you with some specifics about the type of today's pot on the NJ ballot that you may not know: It is up to 99% pure THC (the psychoactive intoxicating addictive chemical in marijuana) compared to the marijuana of the 1970's which was only 5% THC and was bad enough then. Today's pot also is being marketed as the THC edibles mentioned above that look just like regular candies, sodas and baked goods. Many children in "legal" states are ending up in hospital emergency rooms.

The detrimental health issues are many including stroke, worsening of lung/respiratory conditions (particularly bad with NJ facing COVID and EVALI) as well exacerbating psychotic episodes, suicidality, and bipolar disorders. Even



for those of us who would never partake of these recreational marijuana products, we are at risk - more impaired drivers on NJ roads, increased crime (crime increases in neighborhoods with potshops) which causes increased property insurance rates but decreased property values, increased NJ auto and health insurance rates.

The ballot question does not address decriminalization and it is not the medical marijuana already in NJ potshops. It is simply recreational addictive impairment-causing "personal use" weed products advocated by an industry that preys on addictions, in particular in communities of low-income and color; its only concern is to make a commercial profit as with tobacco and alcohol (in fact several large tobacco companies have now invested in the pot industry).

Speaking of profit, the promises of revenue do not materialize in the few States that have legalized; in fact it costs taxpayers \$4.50 in police and public health issues for every \$1 generated.

In States that have "legalized", children ages 12-17 years old have increased their use of these high-potency pot products, even though the law says "age 21 years." Kids walking by potshops become desensitized to it, it becomes normal. Every town in NJ is susceptible - even in my small town of Highland Park for example a pot dispensary already has a conditional lease that if approved, will sell THC products right next to a pizza place.

I have included some materials on this critically important subject that I hope you find helpful (see attachments) ; I would also urge you to visit nopotnj.org and njalm.org which are two not-for-profit bi-partisan committees created in New Jersey to educate on these issues and suggest residents Vote No in order to help preserve the health, safety and productivity of all NJ families.

It would be wonderful if you would think about ways you can help spread the word on this to as many New Jersey families as possible, letting them know about this serious situation and the importance of Vote No on Question 1.

Meena Harris' Morphed Photo of Kamala Harris as Maa Durga is an Insult to Hindu Americans

By Ankur Vaidya, Chairman, FIA

Meena Harris, a generationally lost Hindu soul, whose best attempt to claim support for her aunt Kamala Harris, was to do what's expected of people who are clueless of their origins and heritage. She mocked the holy Maa Durga by superimposing her aunt's face onto her, and superimposing former Vice President Biden's face on the lion, a holy vehicle of Maa Durga, who is diminishing the demon, Mahishasur (whose face has been superimposed by that of President Trump's). Mahishasur the evil demon (whose face is superimposed with that of President Trump's) is symbolic to evil, who was invincible and filled with arrogance of superiority. Not only is this an insult to the Hindu base and Hindu religion, but it's also an insult to the sitting president of the U.S.

What is Meena Harris trying to insinuate??

Having said that, instead of getting infuriated, it's more a pity-filled sympathetic feeling I express for the niece and her aunt. Expressing the sorry feeling for the lost souls, I pray the same to Maa Durga that Meena Harris has mocked.

Maa Durga please forgive her for her karma.

She has demonstrated her ignorance and carelessness by perfectly timing this and tweeting it on Oct. 17, the first day of Navratri, which to the conservative, God-loving, law abiding, family-oriented, peace loving and religious Hindus is a true time of nine days of worship, fasting, prayers and religious ceremony. To the Hindu community it's a double whammy, as Meena Harris and Kamala Harris, both have Hinduism in their genes from their ancestry.

Before tweeting and in the day and age of Google, a simple search would have shown Meena Harris that her tweet will indeed hurt the Hindus, especially when the limelight for now is on her family due to her aunt's nomination. But that did not stop her from spelling this insult on the Hindus.

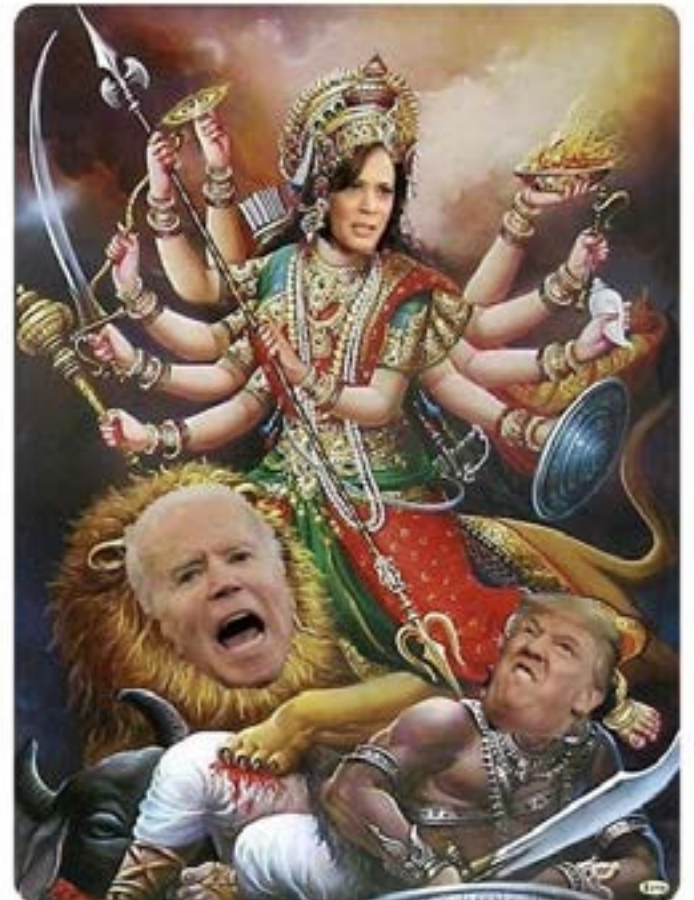
I am confident that she would not do this to a photo of a deity of any other religion or faith as the repercussion and push back could be very loud and consequential to her aunt's election bid.

Having realized the numbers of the Hindu community, their peace-loving, law abiding and non-confrontational attitude, which has a record when targeted and no one stands up or says anything except a few murmurs that did happen. The shocking truth to this is that a rather different and a total opposite characterization of the Hindu community is being promoted without any proof. This storytelling is being promoted by some and orchestrated by the local politicians whose pockets are being filled by these vested interest promoters of the anti-Hindu, anti India sentiment. A reason why in this election cycle, the word India and Indian Americans has been significantly suppressed with the use of the words desis. But the non-confrontational attitude of the community has remained in effect with politicians pocketing the money from the community trading photo ops. I urge the community to express their voice and displeasure.

Write to the Biden-Harris campaign and ask for an apology.

I can guarantee it that if this was done to any other faith or religion, Kamala Harris would be sitting with that community apologizing and praying with them. But since it's the Hindu community, the game of "we didn't know this is considered insulting," "I didn't make this" is being played out.

We should unite and send a strong and peaceful message that we cannot be taken for granted.



Will Ritwik Bhowmik Replace Aamir Khan's Son Junaid in Hindi Remake of Malayalam Film 'Ishq'?

It is being speculated that Ritwik Bhowmik of Amazon Prime's "Bandish Bandits" fame is all set to replace Aamir Khan's son Junaid Khan in the Hindi remake of Malayalam film "Ishq." Although there is no official confirmation yet, Junaid Khan was to mark his debut with this film, to be produced by Neeraj Pandey and directed by Shashant Shah. However, the Times of India reported that Neeraj is quite impressed with Ritwik's performance and is thinking of casting him for the lead role in "Ishq" in place of Junaid. Ritwik, the young lead of "Bandish Bandits" has been lauded for his impeccable performance in the web series.

The report quoted a source close to the development as saying, "The film may not be an exact replica of the Malayalam one. However, all those details are being still worked out which includes the modalities."

Deepa Mehta's 'Funny Boy' to Release on Netflix in December

Deepa Mehta's latest film, "Funny Boy," has been picked up by Ava DuVernay's ARRAY Releasing. To be released on Netflix this December, the film is an adaptation of Shyam Selvadurai's novel of the same name. "Funny Boy" is Selvadurai's debut novel set in Sri Lanka during the 1970s and 1980s. Variety says it was "ground-breaking in its discussion of identity politics against the backdrop of escalating conflict between the island nation's Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority." Mehta, the Oscar-nominated "Earth" and "Midnight's Children" director wrote the screenplay for the film alongside Selvadurai. Shot on location in Colombo, "Funny Boy" explores Tamil protagonist Arjie's (Arush Nand/Brandon Ingram) sexual awakening from a young boy, deemed "funny" by disapproving family, to a teenager enamored by a male classmate, just as political tensions escalate between the Sinhalese and Tamils in the years leading up to the 1983 uprisings – violence that led into a 26-year civil war. "Funny Boy" will debut on Netflix in the U.S., U.K., New Zealand and Australia on Dec. 10. It will also receive a theatrical release in Canada, as well as select cities throughout the U.S. that month.

Shah Rukh Khan and John Abraham to Share Screen Space in 'Pathan'

Bollywood actor John Abraham will be seen as an antagonist in Siddharth Anand's "Pathan," starring Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone. Like Anand's previous outing, "War," "Pathan" will be a slick and stylish revenge drama. It marks Khan's and Abraham's first on-screen union. The film also marks the end of Khan's two-year sabbatical. He was last seen in the 2018 film "Zero." Abraham meanwhile began shooting for the upcoming action-thriller film 'Satyameva Jayate 2' in Lucknow. Also starring Divya Khosla, "Satyameva Jayate 2," is produced by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar (T-Series), Monisha Advani, Madhu Bhojwani and Nikhil Advani (Emmay Entertainment). It is slated to release on May 12, 2021.

Abhay Deol Joins Disney Channel's Original Movie 'Spin'

Bollywood actor Abhay Deol and British actress Meera Syal have joined the cast of Disney Channel's original movie, "Spin," directed by Manjari Makijany. Written by Carley Steiner and Josh Cagan, "Spin" follows effervescent 15-year-old Rhea Kumar (Avantika Vandanapu) who lives with her tight-knit multigenerational family. It follows Kumar, who learns she has a passion for creating DJ mixes that blend the textures of her Indian heritage and the world around her. She discovers that she has a natural gift for creating beats and producing music but must find the courage to follow her true inner talent. Production was to begin this month for a 2021 premiere on Disney Channel. Vandanapu, a high school sophomore in Los Angeles, California, is a familiar face on TV as well as in Telugu cinema. She made her television debut in 2018.

Vandanapu stars as Monyca in "Diary of a Future President" on Disney+ and can be heard as the voice of Kamala in Disney Junior's "Mira, Royal Detective." Director Makijany is an alum of the American Film Institute's Directing Workshop for Women (AFI DWW), the Universal Directors Initiative and the Fox Filmmakers Lab. Her debut feature "Desert Dolphin," a coming of age sports-drama and India's first skateboarding feature, will be released globally on Netflix in 2021.