

# THE DIASPORA

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## PM MODI INAUGURATES 25<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 25th National Youth Festival, celebrating the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, in Puducherry on Wednesday, January 12th.



PM Modi commenced his speech by paying tribute to Swami Vivekananda. He said, "I bow down to Swami Vivekananda on his birth anniversary. Apart from it being a year of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, it is special for two more reasons. This year as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Shri Aurobindo & the 100th birth anniversary of Subramania Bharati."

The occasion began with a speech by Union Minister Anurag Thakur, who was followed by Puducherry Chief Minister N. Rangaswamy.

The Prime Minister also inaugurated the MSME Ministry's Technology Centre in Puducherry, which cost over Rs. 122 crores to build. This technological center will help young people gain skills and will be able to train roughly 6,400 people per year.

He also inaugurated the 'Perunthalaivar Kamarajar Mani-  
mandapam' auditorium, which

was built by the government of Puducherry. This auditorium is equipped with an open-air theatre with a capacity of 1000 people. It is primarily used for educational purposes.



Those in attendance were Union Ministers Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, Shri Narayan Rane, Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma, and Shri Nisith Pramanik, as well as Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan, Chief Minister of Puducherry Shri N. Rangaswamy, State Ministers,

and Parliamentarians.

The Prime Minister praised the fact that today's Indian youngsters are scripting the global prosperity code. In the unicorn ecosystem throughout the

world, the Indian youth is a force to be reckoned with. India now boasts a thriving startup environment with over 50,000 companies. Among them, more than 10,000 businesses responded to the Pandemic's challenges. The Prime Minister proclaimed the

New India mantra: "Compete and Conquer". The Prime Minister remarked that today's youth have a 'Can Do' spirit which is a source of inspiration for every generation.

According to the Prime Minister, there were many such soldiers in the freedom struggle who did not receive the respect they deserved. The more our kids write and study on such dignitaries, the greater the awareness among the country's future generations, he noted. He also urged the young to be vocal and contribute to the drive for cleanliness.

As a last, PM Modi wished India for the festivals like Lohri, Khichdi, Pongal, and others and requested people to follow the COVID protocols and stay safe while celebrating the festivals.

PM Modi also mentioned that legal age to marry, for women, has been raised to 21 years from 18 in order to provide the young women of the country with better future



38<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DANCE PE CHANCE COMPETITION  
CELEBRATING INDIA'S 73<sup>RD</sup> REPUBLIC DAY



# THE OLDEST DANCE COMPETITION DANCE PE CHANCE is BACK



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# A GLIMPSE OF DANCE PE CHANCE



# Top officials of India, US meet for home Security Dialogue

**A**t a Homeland Security Dialogue attended by top officials from both nations on January 12, India and the United States reviewed ongoing cooperation in counterterrorism, cyber security, and a range of other concerns.

During the meeting, held in virtual mode, the officials from the two countries also identified further steps that can be taken to explore opportunities and synergies in advancing security cooperation, an official statement

said. Among other things, the group reviewed ways to safeguard vital infrastructure and global supply chains, maritime security, aviation security, customs enforcement, and trade security.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla and US Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans in the Department of Homeland Security Robert Silvers cochaired the senior officers meeting of the India US Homeland Security Dialogue.

Both sides reviewed the

ongoing cooperation and identified further steps that can be taken to explore opportunities and synergies in advancing cooperation in counterterrorism, cyber security, securing critical infrastructure and global supply chains, maritime security, aviation security, customs enforcement, and trade security, among other issues, the statement said.

Both sides agreed that the existing subgroups under the homeland security dialogue on

law enforcement engagement, securing global supply chains, aviation security, investigative cooperation, and capacity building and training would meet separately in the coming months to deliberate and explore how ongoing cooperation can be strengthened further.

The meeting concluded with both sides expressing satisfaction with the ongoing partnership and agreeing to deepen bilateral engagement in all areas of mutual concern.

# The New Jersey Leadership Program opens applications for South Asian youth.

**T**he New Jersey Leadership Program (NJLP) has begun accepting applications for the NJLP 2022 Summer Fellowship Program, which aims to introduce South Asian youngsters in the state to local government and politics.

Applications are due by Friday, Feb 25, 2022, and interested candidates may apply online at [www.njlead.org](http://www.njlead.org), the Guttenberg, New Jersey-based non-partisan, non-profit 501(c)3 organization

announced in a press release.

The NJLP Summer Fellowship Program is a six-week program that places South Asian children in high school or college in New Jersey in full-time internships with the Governor's Office, State Agency, Member of Congress, or State Legislator. In addition to the internship, the Fellowship hosts a weekly lecture series with elected politicians, senior government officials, corporate executives, non-profit leaders, and others.

"The Summer Fellowship pro-

gram invites New Jersey's South Asian youth to get first-hand experience in government and public service," said NJLP President Ishan Shah.

"There has never been more of an important time to get involved and ensure that New Jersey's South Asian community is well represented in the government in the future."

The NJLP Fellowship Program is entering its seventh year and over 60 South Asian Fellows have graduated since its inception.

NJ Lead is dedicated to promoting South Asian American youth participation and education at the local level of government in the State of New Jersey, the release said.

It aims at developing leadership skills, building upon Public Policy Knowledge and creating the pipeline for South Asian Americans to work in government or pursue public office at the local, state, and federal levels, it said.

## Community News

### FIA Upcoming Events and Updates

*Due to the prevalent COVID conditions, the Dance Pe Chance event has been rescheduled to May 7th. All essential modifications to the event are being made which also includes intimating the Choreographers and the students about the schedule.*

*Also the DPC Ticket Payment App is being developed. Promotional content is ready to be released via social media and television. The event's sponsorship and celebrity judges are yet to be announced.*

*The event for International Women's Day in Washington, DC also stands delayed. The event is expected to take place between May 11th and 17th. Four recipients have been confirmed for International Women's Day. The location of the International Women's Day event will be determined based on the then existing COVID conditions.*

*A meeting will be conducted once a week to discuss the activities for the India Day Parade. All preparations and materials would be finished and ordered by the end of March.*

# Makar Sankranti Festival-Joyous Religious and Popular Festival

**M**akar Sankranti is a very religious, social, traditional, and joyous festival in India and is celebrated on January 14th each year. As the name suggests, Makar Sankranti signifies

The transit of the sun in Capricorn/Makar Rashi

In Indian astronomy, Sankranti means the transmigration of the sun from one Rashi (constellation of the zodiac in Indian astronomy) to the next. Sun turns litrayan (North-erly movement) during the Sankranti and follows a positive course i.e from south to north of the equator; According To Hindu tradition and philosophy, the six months of uttarayan (January to June)

Represent a single day of gods therefore all kinds of worship, charities, religious activities, and donations are believed to be more rewarding and help in better desting during this period.

On Makar Sankranti day, taking a dip in the holy water of rivers like Ganga, Yamuna, Kaveri, Narmada, Godavari, Saryu, etc. is considered very auspicious as it is believed to purify the mind and body. Seeking blessings from one's own parents by touching their feet is considered auspicious and rewarding Surya (sun) is regarded as father and sun plays vital role in the janma kundalini ( Birth horoscope) offering Arghya/ Jal to Suryanarayani and reciting Aditya Hridaya Stotra or suryashtak gives good health and wards of enemies. Donating money, grains, white sesame seeds (Safed till), rice, jaggery, and khichadi are considered charities on this day. Reciting Maha Mrutyunjay Mantra, Vishnu Sahastra Nam, Shani Chalisa, Shani Stotra, and Hanuman Chalisa is also considered rewarding.

Makar Sankranti is celebrated in various parts of the Indian subcontinent with dif-

ferent names. In Gujarat, Makar Sankranti is a 2-day fabulous celebration. January 14th is Uttarayan and January 15th is Vasi Uttarayan. It is a primary kite-flying day for children, youth, and the elderly. Most of the family members go to their roofs with friends to enjoy kite flying the whole day. Even at night, they enjoy flying tukkal. They also have a nice lunch in traditional undhiyu-poori, fafda, jakbi khaman, til tikkis, sweets, tea, coffee, etc. The entire area is filled with kites and people shouting "e kypo chhe," "e lapet," and other exhilarating phrases. One Gujrati movie, "Kypo Chhe," was very popular. The government declares a public holiday and most of the offices and structures remain closed to participate in kite flying. For over 30 years, the government of Gujarat has organised kite flying competitions in Ahmedabad in which many local, national, and international kite flyers participate. Shri Modi Ji also

participated when he was the chief minister of Gujrat.

Kite flying in big cities is an event to behold, with Gujrat, Rajasthan, and Mumbai also enjoying kite flying. Jaipur also has a wonderful kite flying festival. Makar Sankranti is also regarded as a harvest festival throughout India. Working on Ravi fasal in Punjab and neighbouring states, it is celebrated as "Lohri". In south India, it is celebrated as "Pongal" and with some regional variations. There is also a belief that if somebody dies on Makar Sankranti day, he/she gets moksha in the Mahabharata. Bhishma Pitama chose Makar Sankranti day to end life. Makar Sankranti is thus a religious, social, and joyful festival with a long history and rich traditions. When FIA hosted the GANA Gujarati convention in the year 2006, kite flying was done in an open space, inviting young, old, and other ethnic groups to witness. Also, til-gul was served.



# Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, a day to celebrate overseas Indians

## ASIAN ERA

Every year, January 9 is celebrated as the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) or Non-Resident Indian Day to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community to the development of the nation. It holds great significance as the day not only

reconnects NRIs with their roots but celebrates their achievements. This day also acknowledges the difficulties faced by Indian expatriate workers living abroad.

Amid the Covid-19 surge, Non-Resident Indians (NRI) across the globe joined on Jan 9, 2021, to celebrate the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention in a virtual format. Accord-

ing to the revised format, the next PBD Convention would be in January 2023. Though 2020 being an in-between year had no convention organized by the External Affairs ministry, there were celebrations in Delhi and also in many Indian embassies across the world. However, the resurgence of Covid with the new Omicron variant, in almost every part

of the world, has made it unwise to have any gatherings this year.



## Pravasi Bharatiya Divas: an overview

### It is the commemoration of the return of Mahatma Gandhi

When a High-Level Committee was set up in 2002 by the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, one of the recommendations was the creation of a platform to interact with Indian Diaspora. On receiving the recommendation in a public function, Vajpayee chose 9th of January for the celebration. It was on January 9, 1915, that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa.

### Its aim is to connect Indians in the diaspora

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention is the flagship event of the Ministry of External Affairs and provides an important platform to engage and connect with overseas Indians. PBD Conventions help in creating a network of NRIs in all the countries of the world and connecting the younger generation with immigrants so that they can evolve and contribute significantly to the development of the country.

### Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is no longer an annual event

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has been celebrated every year since January 9, 2003. However, in the year 2015, its format was revised to celebrate the PBD once every two years and to hold theme-based PBD Conferences during the intervening period with participation from overseas diaspora experts, policymakers and stakeholders.

### Awards are given to deserving overseas Indians

The President of India confers Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards on exceptional individuals or an organization established by NRIs or PIOs to recognize their achievements and honor their contributions to various fields, both in India and overseas. Since 2016, the Government of India has doubled the number of awardees each year to 30 after a decision to grant the award once every two years.

### The chief guest of PBD is usually a foreigner

Since its inception in 2003, PBD have had chief guests from various countries across the world. Suriname President Chandrikapersad Santokhi was the chief guest in 2021.

### Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has a specific theme

Since the 12th edition of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention, the government has used different themes for the celebration. The theme for the 2021 event was "Contributing to Aatmanirbhar Bharat".

### New Delhi has held the most Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention usually rotates around different Indian cities. However, New Delhi has been the venue to PBD conventions for the years 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2014.

### Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is organized outside India

Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is organized from time to time in different cities outside India to give Diaspora Indians who cannot travel to India for the main event a chance to also link up with the diaspora community and with their motherland. RPBD has been organized in 8 different cities. The 2018 RPBD was held in Singapore.

### Pravasi Bharatiya Divas play a huge role in the development of India

Indian nationals residing abroad use the platform to interact with their government and the rest of the population. Diaspora Indians use the event to bring back knowledge and experiences they have gained from other countries.

# Indian origin engineers body launches Innovation Hub

**O**n December 19, the American Association of Engineers of Indian Origin (AAEIO) hosted a Christmas celebration for its members at Chicago's Bolingbrook Golf Course's Kennedy Hall. Several members were there, including major CEOs, academics, and fellow engineers with their spouses.

The AAEIO Innovation Hub was opened by US Representative Bill Foster of the 11th District, AAEIO President Gladson Varghese, President-Elect Ajit Pant, Vice President Nitin Maheshwari, and other board members. The AAEIO Innovation Center is a collaboration between AAEIO and prominent institutions (including the governments of India and the



United States, Purdue University, and Northwestern University) to commercialise key technologies.

Dr. Deepak Vyas, CEO Redberri Group, talked about the need to drive innovation and the ways

the AAEIO platform can help. He emphasized that there are over 16,000 technologies that NASA has which need to be commercialized. As part of the innovation center, AAEIO will set up a fund where state and other grants can be used in conjunction with AAEIO's start-up, corporate and regular members can use these funds on select technologies. These efforts met with an overwhelming response from AAEIO the members.

Dr. Promod Vohra, former Engineering Dean of Northern Illinois University and current President of ProBys, also talked to the audience about the importance of engineers working together to tackle current problems.

# Supporting Domestic Workers

**O**n December 31, New York Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar's two legislation protecting domestic workers' human rights were signed into law by Governor Kathy Hochul. The two historic acts, A6077A and A8007, enhance benefits and protections for hundreds of thousands of domestic workers in New York State, many of whom are of South Asian and Caribbean descent. Rajkumar, the only Indian-American woman in the Empire State legislature, is elated to find support from Eric Adams, the new Mayor of New York City. Adams made a strong endorsement of the law on Jan 1, his first day in office. "I am deeply honored that on his very first day as Mayor of the City of New York, @NYCMayor Eric Adams spoke in support of my legislation for domestic workers," Rajkumar posted on Twitter. Her inspiration for the bills came from the interaction she had with one of the Caribbean constituents who is a domestic worker facing hard times during Covid.

Previously, the New York State Human Rights Law exempted do-

mestic workers from nearly all of their rights.

Rajkumar's second bill (A6077A) provides domestic employees with paid family leave. Domestic employees who work at least 20 hours per week will now be eligible for paid family leave and disability insurance.

Previously, they needed to work at least 40 hours, despite a 20-hour minimum applying to all other industries.

"This kind of 'care' work is one of the most important kinds of work and it is not often valued or recognized," Rajkumar said emphasizing that now a workforce that has historically been overlooked and under-protected, will get what it deserves.

Domestic work is one of the fastest-growing industries in the United States, with more than 300,000 domestic workers and 2.7 million households relying on them in New York State alone, according to estimates by Rajkumar's office.

"Working informally and behind closed doors, domestic workers are vulnerable to exploitation, harassment, and dis-

crimination. This vulnerability disproportionately affects immigrant women and women of color, who overwhelmingly make up the domestic workforce," a press release from her office noted.

In New York State, 93% of domestic workers are women, 69% are immigrants, and 30% are African American, it noted.

As an attorney and civil rights lawyer her whole life, Rajkumar has focused on the rights of women and immigrant communities. This legislative initiative built on that experience, she noted.

"With a new year comes a new era of dignity and respect for our domestic workers. They are a cornerstone of our economy and our society. By caring for our children, our aging parents, and our loved ones with disabilities, they allow so many of us the flexibility to pursue careers.

Domestic workers deserve the same freedom from discrimination and harassment afforded anyone at an office desk," Rajkumar said in her formal statement.

The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights was passed in New York in

2010, and Rajkumar's legislation builds on that.

For the current legislative session in Albany which began on Jan. 5, and ending in June, Rajkumar has some more legislation she is intent on getting passed into law.

"On my radar, I have some three bills to support veterans, our heroes, who put their lives on the line for us," she noted. Also, she is a champion of a single-payer health system and is working toward The New York Health Act.



NY State Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar, left, as newly sworn-in Mayor of NYC Eric Adams expresses support for her domestic workers legislation.

# New York's back, says mayor Adams

**F**ollowing the New Year's Eve ball drop, Eric Adams was sworn in as the 110th mayor of New York City at Times Square by Hon. Sylvia O. Hinds-Radix, an associate judge of the Supreme Court of the State of New York.

"New York is back," Adams proclaimed. "Happy New Year, New York! I'm so excited about the future of the greatest City in the world, and humbled to be your mayor. Knowing struggles of New Yorkers isn't enough - I've lived them. Working-class communities, communities of color, & immigrant communities made me the man I am, & they elected me Mayor. This is their government."

Mayor Eric Adams on Saturday delivered his first formal speech at City Hall, declaring the city "will not be controlled by crisis" as it grapples with a surge of Covid-19 cases nearly two years into the pandemic. Adams laid out his vision for the future of the five boroughs, saying he wants to leave divisive rhetoric behind and adopt a practical approach to governing.

"We have lived through two years of continuous crisis and that insults our very nature as New Yorkers. The crisis tells us

that it is in charge. That it is in control. The crisis wants to tell us we can be happy, when we can be sad, when we can work and how we can enjoy our city. The crisis wants to tell us how to live," Adams, a Democrat, said during remarks.



"But there is one thing everyone knows about New Yorkers: We don't like anyone telling us what to do," he added. "This will be our New Year's resolution: We

will not be controlled by crisis."

Adams went on to say getting vaccinated against Covid-19 "is not letting the crisis control you" and doing things like going to Broadway shows and returning to offices "are declarations of confidence that our city is our own."

He listed NYC's most pressing problems, "unemployment is high, crime is high, Covid cases are high again." Adams promised a government that "weeds out waste and inefficiencies," that takes accountability and tackles problems head on by being "radically practical."

"Our government has been dysfunctional for far too long and it created its own crises long before COVID," Adams said. "Whether it was crime-ridden communities, poor schools, economic inequality or racial injustice, our problems have been normalized for generations while New York's government struggled to match the energy and innovation of New Yorkers."

"Our administration is charting a course for a truly equitable recovery uplifting all of us, from building topflight schools and empowering our immigrant neighbours to reviving our tourism sector and supporting our small businesses. We are fully prepared to hit the ground running."

"It's not just about doing something new, it's about doing something right," he said. "It's not about showmanship, it's about showing up." Adams added: "That is why the theme of my first 100 days is GSD: Get Stuff Done."

## Eric Garcetti's nomination as United States Ambassador to India is approved by Senate Committee.

**T**he Senate Foreign Relations Committee decided Wednesday to move forward with the nomination of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti to be the United States ambassador to India, more than six months after President Joe Biden nominated him.

The nomination now goes to the entire Senate, which will vote on whether to confirm Garcetti at

a later date. President Joe Biden nominated Garcetti to be India's ambassador in July, and he attended Wednesday's hearings in Washington, D.C. Garcetti also worked on Biden's presidential campaign as a national co-chair.

"Today the fundamental nature of that strategic partnership is firmly ingrained here in Washington and in New Delhi," Garcetti said. "If confirmed, I will endeavor to advance our ambitious bi-

lateral partnership united by a free and open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

There are groups that are actively fighting for the human rights of people on the ground in India that will get direct engagement with me.





# Anurag Kumar elected as President of BJANA

**B**ihar Jharkhand Association of North America (BJANA), a non-profit organization based in New Jersey, USA run by volunteers, announced the election of its new president, office-bearers, and executive members for the 2022-2023 term.

Anurag Kumar who has his roots in the Nalanda district of Bihar was elected President of BJANA and Sanjeev Singh Vice President. Anil K Agrawal the Secretary and Sushant Krishen the Joint Secretary declared Priti Kashyap the Treasurer.

Executive members - Dr. Avishek Kumar, Nimisha Verma, Vandana Abhishek Kumar, Akhilesh Azad, Sanjay Gupta, Dipen Banerjee, and Rahul Sahay - were also elected.

Under the leadership of past president Dr. Avinash Gupta, BJANA achieved new heights and delivered unimaginable services to the people of Bihar and Jharkhand in the USA and India. Collective effort defined the root of success. Anurag Kumar thanks his predecessor Dr. Gupta for guiding and letting him explore the all-new opportunity to serve the needy. Dr. Gupta congratulated the newly elected president

Anurag Kumar and expressed his confidence in the new team and wished them all the success.

BJANA Election commission (Dr. Anil Kumar, Ranjeet Sinha, and Rakesh Kumar) congratulated the new team and it was great to see all the young leaders.

Community leaders Dr. Binod Sinha (Urologist), Dr. Sudhanshu Prasad, Sashi Sinha, Bhawesh Choudhary, Anjali Prasad, and Vinay Singh congratulated the new team and wished them good luck.

Alok Kumar, past president Federation of Indian Association and BJANA member, was amazed

es to the new team.

Anurag, born in Amawan, grew up in various parts of Bihar, such as Begusarai, Mokama, and Patna. An engineer by education, Anurag moved to the USA two decades ago and worked with JPMorgan Chase. Currently, he is working in Johnson & Johnson. Along with his long successful professional journey, Anurag remained connected to his roots and nurtured a deep desire to invest in the community. He has been involved in various activities, such as mentoring BJANA Kids and start-ups; successfully building charitable partners



*Anurag Kumar President of BJANA for 2022-23*

the USA to raise funds for BJANA's charitable causes and events. In his new role, Anurag is keen to focus on mentoring youth, entrepreneurs, and help with development activities in areas such as economy, education, and health.

BJANA is continuously working for the welfare and growth of the community. In the last two years, it has organized various health camps, provided ambulances services, distributed PPE kits, food, and medicines in two Indian states - Bihar and Jharkhand - in partnership with local non-profit organizations Aastha Charitable, Asha, and PRAN-BJANA. BJANA is also partnering with KARA Medical Foundation for Neuro-rehab Center and Anterjyoti Balika Vidyalaya, a Blind School for skills development. BJANA also partnered with FIA to set up the Electric Crematorium.

BJANA has outlined its goals and objectives for the next two years. One of the primary goals is to connect BJANA Youth by providing a robust platform where BJANA kids and adults can volunteer for various activities in the USA and Bihar & Jharkhand. The vision of the new leadership includes promotion of business and tourism in Bihar and Jharkhand by partnering with the Chamber of Commerce, state governments of Bihar and Jharkhand, and Consulate General of India, New York. They are also working on modules to mentor the students and start-ups in Bihar, Jharkhand, and the USA.



**Ranjeet Sinha    Dr. Anil Kumar    Rakesh Kumar**

## BJANA Election Committee

to see the young and energetic team under the leadership of Mr. Anurag Kumar. He has Congratulated and conveyed his best wish-

in Bihar & Jharkhand, India, and building partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce in Bihar & Jharkhand and local businesses in



# India-U.S. discuss Bilateral Issues, Indo-Pacific, Global Matters

**I**ndia and the U.S. discussed many important bilateral issues, as well as coordination on the Indo-Pacific region and current global matters, External Affairs Minister S.

Jaishankar, said Jan. 4, after talks with his U.S. counterpart, Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

"@A broad-ranging conversation yesterday night with @SecBlinken. Covered current bilateral issues, Indo-Pacific, and pressing global matters. Also exchanged New Year greetings," he said in a tweet.

The U.S.-India partnership is founded on a shared commitment to freedom, democratic principles, equal treatment of all citizens, human rights, and the rule of law, an official statement said. Through trade, investment, and connectivity, both countries have a common interest in sup-

porting global security, stability, and economic development.

The United States supports India's rise as a leading global force and an important partner in efforts to ensure the Indo-Pacific region is one of peace, stability, and expanding prosperity. According to the US Department of State, the two nations' strong people-to-people contacts, represented in a four million-strong Indian American diaspora, are a major source of strength for the cooperation.

The United States hosted the second 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in December 2019, led by the Secretaries of State and Defense of the United States and their Indian counterparts, at which both sides reaffirmed India's status as a Major Defense Partner and deepened cooperation on maritime security, interoperability,

and information sharing. While the 2+2 is the primary conversation mechanism between the United States and India, there are over 30 bilateral dialogues and working groups that cover every facet of human effort, from space and health cooperation to energy and high-tech trade.

These include the United States-India Counterterrorism

Joint Working Group, which was formed in 2000 and is one of their oldest government-to-government dialogues, as well as the Strategic Energy Partnership, Cyber Dialogue, Civil Space Working Group, Trade Policy Forum, Defense Policy Group, and many others.

*Photo: Indianexpress*



*The telephonic conversation took place on Monday night, Jaishankar said.*

## "eternalHealth", a company started by Indian American, has raised \$10 million in Series A funding.

**O**n January 11, eternalHealth, the first new health plan certified in Massachusetts since 2013, said that it had raised an additional \$10 million in Series A investment. According to a news release, the extra funding follows an initial \$10 million in seed and pre-series A funding from prominent healthcare and digital entrepreneurs last summer.

Former Apple CEO John Sculley, who participated in the Series A fundraising round, believes in eternalHealth's purpose, which was launched by Indian American entrepreneur Pooja Ika, who was the first woman to launch a new Medicare Advantage Health Plan in the United States.

"Around two decades ago, I decided I wanted to disrupt the healthcare industry by collabo-

rating with entrepreneurs who believed in their mission," said Sculley, former Apple CEO and an investor and shareholder in eternalHealth, "I truly believe we have a healthcare moonshot with eternalHealth and I am excited to see how we can better the space together." I believe in Pooja's mission and, with the help of her team, she has been able to accomplish so much in one year."

Ika said the Series A funding, which includes seed investors and additional successful technology and healthcare entrepreneurs, will be used to support the day-to-day operations, and help attract and retain membership, while most of the capital will be used as risk-based capital to support the company's membership growth, noted the release.

Typically, the launch of a new health plan takes two to three

years and costs tens of millions of dollars, said Ika.

"At eternalHealth, we accomplished this historic goal within a year. The initial seed round helped us build a technology-powered infrastructure, optimize our operations, and hire a skilled team of 20 professionals," she added. "Now, that we are operationally sound, we are actively trying to grow and increase our membership base. The goal has always been to build a sustainable business model, that is committed to doing things the right way."

According to the press announcement, eternalHealth is based in Boston and delivers high-quality care with minimal out-of-pocket expenses to Massachusetts consumers, with a focus on preventative care and

transparency. eternalHealth is a Medicare Advantage health plan that offers HMO and PPO products that was founded, owned, and built by women.

*Photo: indicanews*



# Reliance Buys Luxury Hotel Mandarin Oriental.

In a \$98 million agreement, Reliance will acquire ownership of Mandarin Oriental New York.

**T**hrough the acquisition of its Cayman Islands-based parent, Indian giant Reliance Industries Ltd is paying roughly \$100 million for a majority share in Mandarin Oriental New York, a five-star hotel in midtown Manhattan.

In a stock market statement on Saturday, January 8, 2022, Re-

liance announced that its industrial investments subsidiary will acquire Cayman Islands-based Columbus Centre Corp (Cayman) for an equity value of about \$98.15 million.

Reliance Industrial Investments and Holdings Ltd said it will expand to its consumer and hospitality businesses by acquiring Columbus Centre Corp

(Cayman), an indirect owner of a 73.37 percent share in Mandarin Oriental New York. The transaction is expected to be completed by the end of March 2022, according to the company.

It further stated that if additional hotel owners want to participate in the deal, its subsidiary will purchase the remaining 26.63 percent ownership at the



Photo: Tamil samayam

same valuation utilized to acquire the indirect 73.37 percent stake.

# A MEMS student has won the Congressional App Challenge.

**A**ccording to a news release from Smith's office, the yearly event is part of a country-wide competition for middle school and high school students to display their software app-development talents and collaboration.

"Congratulations to Aditya Choudhary from the Manalapan-Englishtown Middle School

for his ingenuity and creativity in developing the winning app "Trackie," Smith was quoted as saying in the press release.

"This incredible app helps students and their parents monitor school bus arrival times to prevent students from waiting outside in the cold for an extensive amount of time," he said.

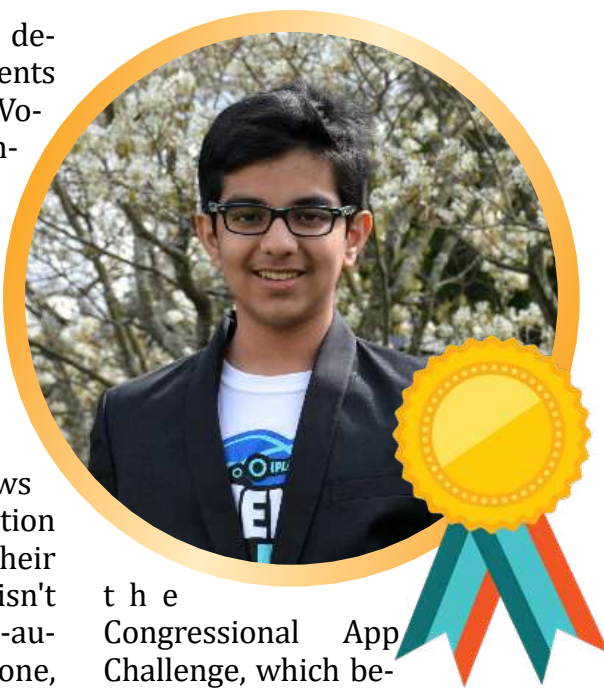
The winning app was awarded by a panel of judges that evaluated eight apps submitted by 20 students from several middle schools and high schools throughout the state's Fourth Congressional District, accord-

ing to the press release.

The software "Aegus," designed by a team of students from the Monmouth County Vocational School District's Communications High School in Wall Township, received an honourable mention, according to Smith. William McHale, Aydin Gurudutt, Jacob Bardin, and Kylie Fuerbacher were among the pupils that took part.

The "Aegus" software allows users to disclose their position on a regular basis to ensure their safety. If the user's status isn't updated, the app sends a pre-authorized message to a loved one, warning them that the person may be in danger.

According to the press release,



the Congressional App Challenge, which began in 2014, has grown to be the world's largest student computer science competition.

The challenge was created to foster STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) skills among students and to emphasize the importance of these skills for the future, especially in areas of the United States' economy like cybersecurity and intellectual property, according to the press release.

This year, 340 members of Congress in their congressional districts participated in the app challenge, which is sponsored nationwide by the Internet Education Foundation.

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RANKING MEMBER, CONGRESSIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA  
www.chesmith.house.gov

Mr. Aditya Choudhary  
63 Springhouse Circle  
Manalapan, New Jersey 07726-4121

Dear Aditya,

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on your first-place finish in the Fourth District of New Jersey's annual Congressional App Challenge (CAC).

Your app, Trackie, fills a need by helping both students and parents monitor school bus arrival times to prevent students from waiting outside in the extreme heat or cold, especially during this upcoming winter season. This app will certainly be useful for families throughout the State and country.

It is inspiring to see your innovative app, as well as your grasp of the importance of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programs. It is also noteworthy that you are the youngest winner to date of my annual CAC, and this year you competed against students who attend STEM-specialized high schools. This is a tremendous achievement and something of which you and your family should be very proud.

Again, congratulations on your win! I would like to extend my best wishes to you on your future endeavors, and I thank you for competing in this year's challenge.

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress

  
**Congressman Christopher H. Smith**  
hereby presents this

*Certificate of Congressional Recognition*

to  
*Aditya Choudhary - First Place*

In recognition of your participation on the winning team in the  
New Jersey Fourth Congressional District  
2021 Congressional App Challenge

December 15, 2021  
Date

  
CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress

# Atul Keshap, has been named President of the US-India Business Council.

The US Chamber of Commerce announced on Jan. 4 that veteran Indian American diplomat Atul Keshap has been chosen president of the US India Business Council.

**K**eshap was most recently the United States Chargé d'Affaires to India in New Delhi, where he led the U.S. Embassy team. He has held a variety of prominent roles in the United States government and is

Photo: Newsindiatimes



a 28-year veteran of the Department of State.

Nisha Biswal, a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, and Keshap's predecessor as president of USIBC will remain deeply involved with the organization as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's senior vice president of International Strategy and Global Initiatives and South Asia, noted the release.

"The U.S.-India Business Council is a critical and vital voice in driving ever closer commercial cooperation between the world's two largest democracies," said Myron Brilliant, executive vice president and head of the International Division of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "We're ecstatic to have Ambassador Keshap as USIBC's next president. His deep expertise and deep global network will empower the organization to even greater heights and serve our members well."

"As the next president of USIBC, I'm honored and excited to continue my involvement in shaping and strengthening

the robust relationship between the United States and India. I'm thrilled to join the U.S. Chamber's international powerhouse team and be part of the world's largest and most influential advocacy organization," said Keshap. "India and its inspired citizenry hold a special place in my heart, and I believe there is no better place to continue this journey than serving as president of USIBC, which is committed and dedicated to enhancing commercial ties between the two countries," he added. "With the two countries on the cusp of entering an even more robust era in our strategic partnership, I feel privileged and honored to lead USIBC."

Biswal commented: "I'm thrilled to welcome my former State Department colleague to the U.S. Chamber family. Ambassador Keshap brings a wealth of experience and knowledge of India and the Indo-Pacific to his new role. Across multiple U.S. administrations, he has been instrumental in expanding U.S.-India strategic and economic coop-

eration and growing commercial ties across multiple sectors. I look forward to working with Atul and the entire USIBC team to deliver to our members and leaders in both countries unmatched experience, advocacy, and networks to further deepen the U.S.-India partnership."

Keshap previously served as the United States Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, as well as Chargé d'Affaires at the United States Embassy in New Delhi; Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs; United States Envoy for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation; and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia in Washington, DC, as well as a number of distinguished roles at the National Defense University, the White House National Security Council, and an international organization. USIBC represents leading multinational corporations with operations in the United States, India, and the Indo-Pacific region.

# India and South Korea set a bilateral trade target of \$50 billion by 2030

**S**outh Korean Trade Minister Yeo Han-Koo met with Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in New Delhi on January 11 to set a bilateral trade objective of \$50 billion by 2030. The two ministers engaged in extensive discussions on a wide range of bilateral trade and investment issues. They also agreed to impart fresh momentum to the discussions on the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement upgradation negotiations and also promote extensive B2B interactions on trade and investment between industry leaders of the two countries, a Commerce and Industry

Ministry statement said.

The two ministers agreed to address issues raised by industry on both sides and instructed their respective negotiating teams to meet on a regular basis in order to complete the CEPA upgradation negotiations as quickly as possible, on a timetable, and with the support of relevant stakeholders, in order to meet the \$50 billion target, set at the summit meeting in 2018.

These frequent meetings will provide a venue for discussing the challenges facing the business community in both nations, as well as new trade-related topics such as supply chain resilience. The ministers decided to

increase bilateral trade in order to achieve growth in a fair and balanced way that benefits both

countries.

Photo: theprint



Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal with South Korean Trade Minister Yeo Han-koo

# Ayushmann Khurrana Is Overwhelmed By Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui's Success As The Most Popular Streamed Content

Within 24 hours of its digital release, Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui, which had a successful theatrical run, has become the most-streamed content.



The goal behind creating 'Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui', according to actor Ayushmann Khurrana, was to discuss the topic of gender inclusion. After a successful theatrical run, the film was published on OTT and became the most streamed material within 24 hours of its digital release. Commenting on the same, Ayushmann Khurrana said, "We wanted to talk about the need for gender in-

clusivity and for that to happen, it was important that a critical number of people saw and engaged with the film."

Ayushmann Khurrana further said, "From the get-go, we wanted to make a film that touches as many people as possible. It is really heart-warming to see that 'Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui' became the number one streamed content within 24 hours of its drop."

He added, "Chandigarh Kare

'Aashiqui' has been made with a lot of love, soul, and heart. The fact that it is entertaining so many people and delivering an important, positive message for social good is really, really humbling."

'Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui,' directed by Abhishek Kapoor, also stars Vaani Kapoor in addition to Ayushmann Khurrana and deals with the topic of transgender acceptance, to which the public has responded well.

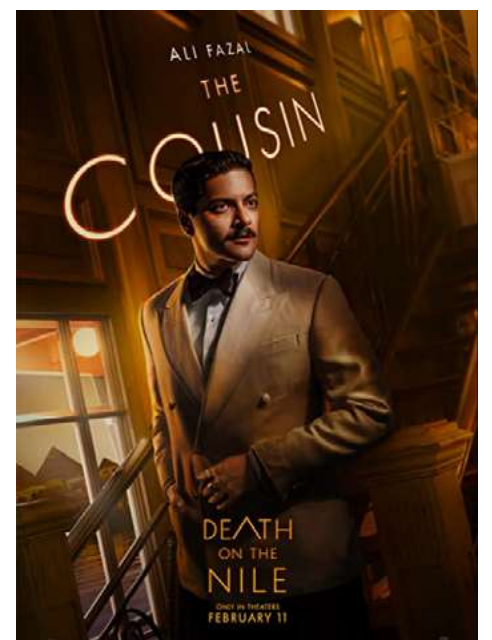
# Death on the Nile Posters: Gal Gadot, Ali Fazal, Kenneth Branagh, and more are hidden in a veil of secrecy

Fans are counting down the days until Kenneth Branagh's new film, Death on the Nile, is released. The new character images were just released on Instagram, causing a flurry of activity among fans who are already fascinated with uncovering the film's unsolved crime. The film will be released on February 11th.

The Death on the Nile characters appear gorgeous in rich tones, thanks to the posters' vintage tint. The character posters disclose which characters will

play which parts in the next film. Gal Gadot introduces herself as "The Bride," Kenneth Branagh as "The Detective," Emma Mackey as "The Lover," Letitia Wright as "The Manager," Ali Fazal as "The Cousin," Annette Bening as "The Mother," and Tom Bateman as "The Associate," while words float about her. Audiences are suspicious of certain posters because they have a striking difference in warm and cold tones on some and none on others. Is it possible that Gal Gadot, who is dressed in purple, is the murderer? Is this a new chapter in the story?

Death on the Nile, on the other hand, is a sequel to the 2017 film Murder on the Orient Express. Both films are adaptations of Agatha Christie's crime novels, directed by Kenneth Branagh. The films follow Hercule Poirot, played by Branagh himself, as he investigates inexplicable killings in order to find the perpetrator or perpetrators! The film's ensemble is impressive, with Gal Gadot, Letitia Wright, Annette Bening, Emma Mackey, Ali Fazal, Tom Bateman, and others leading the way.



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