



THE DIASPORA BI-WEEKLY



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



75TH INDEPENDENCE DAY OF INDIA SUNDAY, AUGUST 15TH, 2021

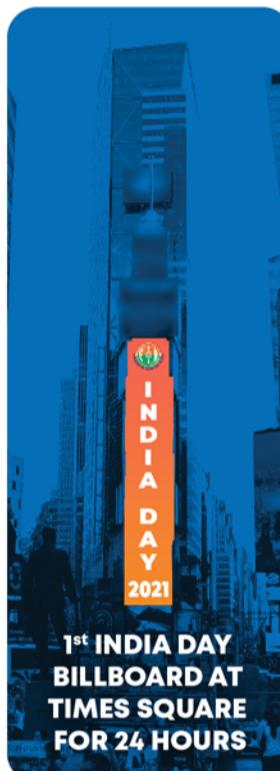
FEDERATION OF INDIAN ASSOCIATIONS (FIA)



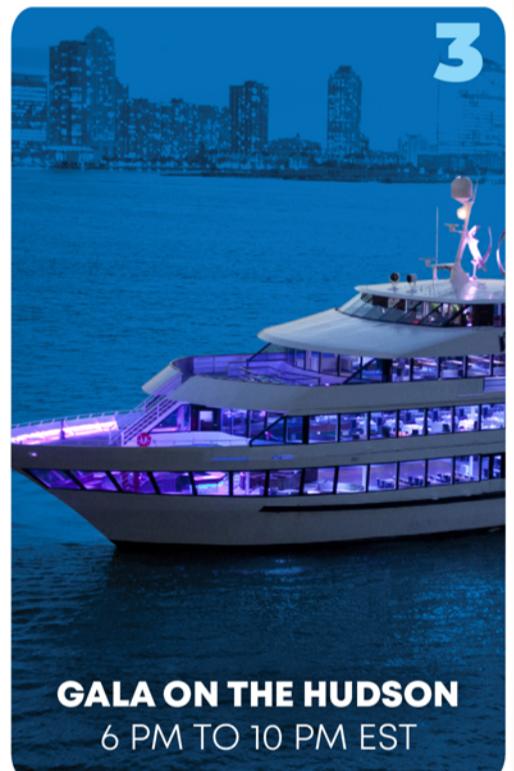
**FLAG HOISTING AT
TIMES SQUARE**
9:30 AM EST



**TRICOLOR
ON THE CROWN OF
EMPIRE STATE BUILDING**



**1ST INDIA DAY
BILLBOARD AT
TIMES SQUARE
FOR 24 HOURS**



GALA ON THE HUDSON
6 PM TO 10 PM EST

19+
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

56+
MEDIA COVERAGE

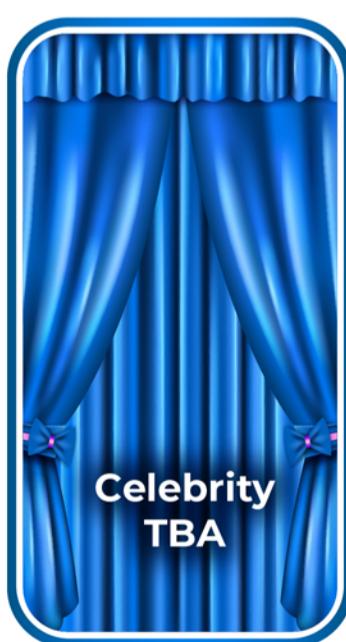
5 MILLION+
SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

This Independence Day,
join us to honor
Abhimanyu Mishra

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Celebrity
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Abhimanyu Mishra
Youngest Grand Master
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Indian photojournalist killed in Af

Danish Siddiqui, a photojournalist from India embedded with Afghan Special Forces, was covering the clashes between the forces and the Taliban on July 16 when he was shot.

Read more on page 4

More power to Abhi, Sameer

Just days after New Jersey lad Abhimanyu Mishra became youngest chess grandmaster, Sameer Banerjee lifted Junior Boys' Wimbledon trophy



Abhimanyu Mishra



Sameer Banerjee

We couldn't have felt prouder of our Indian-American identity than now. In the last issue, we told you about Abhimanyu Mishra, the 12-year-old Indian-American kid from New Jersey who is now the youngest chess Grandmaster in the world. He picked up the title on June 30. Abhi, as we would like to call him, has made not just the US but also his motherland India proud of him.

Now, we have another youngster to celebrate—Sameer Banerjee. The 17-year-old from New Jersey has entered the league of junior Wimbledon champions. He lifted the Wimbledon boys' singles trophy last week in his second junior Grand Slam tournament.

When he entered the tournament, Sameer wasn't even a favorite. His 19th rank was not enough to pitch him as a strong contender of the title. But on July 11, he defeated Victor Lilov to join a prestigious list of Junior Grand Slam winners representing the United States.

Back home in India, too, people cheered for their boy.

Sameer's father Kunal is from Assam and mother Usha from Andhra Pradesh. They migrated to the US in mid-1980s. Sameer was born in 2003.

"I really just wanted to win a round, I didn't expect this. I had a tough French Open, lost to a good player. So here I just wanted to keep my expectations low so that if I passed them, then I'd be happy. But this was way beyond my wildest dreams," he said to a round of applause from the crowd.

Together, Abhi and Sameer have become the youngest flag-bearers for the Indian-American community.

Here's praying for their success in future endeavors!

FIA will celebrate the 75th Independence Day of India on August 15 this year at the Times Square. We are proud to announce that Abhi will join us on the occasion.

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Michigan girl Vaidehi Dongre is Miss India USA 2021

2 Indian-Americans to hold key posts in health segment

Dr Rahul Gupta, former health commissioner of West Virginia, has been selected by US President Joe Biden to be the next director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. If confirmed, Dr Gupta will be the first physician to become the chief of the drug control office.

Surgeon and popular author Atul Gawande has been nominated as assistant administrator of the Bureau for Global Health at the US Agency for International Development.

Seema Nanda is Labour dept solicitor

Indian-American civil rights lawyer Seema Nanda has been confirmed by the US Senate as the solicitor for the Department of Labour. Nanda (48) has previously served as

chief of staff, deputy chief of staff and deputy solicitor in the department during the tenure of Barack Obama. Prior to that, she worked for 15 years in various roles as a labour and employment attorney.

Sirisha Bandla takes off on space flight

Last week, when aeronautical engineer Sirisha Bandla took off with Richard Branson and others on board Virgin Galactic's flight to space, she became only the third woman of Indian origin to fly to space. She follows the path first walked by Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams. Born in Andhra Pradesh in India, Bandla grew up in Houston.

The flight was delayed by 90 minutes due to bad weather. Just before the take-off, she tweeted, "I am so incredibly honoured to be a part of the amazing crew of #Unity22, and to be a part of a company whose mission is to make space available to all."



We are in war with virus, not Facebook: White House

Prez Biden holds ground on 'vaccine misinformation on social media'

#Washington

Following Facebook's rebuttal of US President Joe Biden's remark that social media platforms were killing people with vaccine misinformation, the latter on Monday chose to rephrase his words. However, he held on to his initial summary, saying that what he said was not to be taken literally, but as a challenge to do more to prevent spread of incorrect information regarding vaccine on social media platforms.

"Facebook isn't killing people," he said. "My hope is that Facebook — instead of taking it personally that somehow I'm saying Facebook is killing people — that they would do something about the misinformation, the outrageous misinformation about the vaccine. That's what I meant."

"We are not in a war or a battle with Facebook," said press secretary Jen Psaki, adding "We are in a war with the virus."

Last Thursday, US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, in his first advisory since taking up the position, had said that vaccine misinformation was a factor responsible for slowing down of the country's vaccination rate. He had also called upon social media platforms to curb misinformation related to the pandemic and the vaccines.

A day later, Biden said that platforms like FB were killing people with misinformation, a comment that the latter has strongly objected to. A post on its website said FB was not the reason for US government missing the July 4 deadline to vaccinate 70% Americans.

"We permanently ban Pages, Groups, and accounts that repeatedly break our rules on COVID misinformation, and this includes more than a dozen Pages, Groups, and accounts from some of the individuals referenced in the press briefing," Facebook spokeswoman Dani Lever said in a statement Monday.

Spyware Pegasus caught snooping on 50k phones

Most of the phone numbers in data obtained by the Amnesty International are clustered in 11 countries, including India

The current big news from the digital world is the investigation into the leaked data from Israeli tech company NSO. Its spyware Pegasus has raked up lot of controversy this week.

NSO has claimed that Pegasus is intended for use against terrorists and criminals. Turns out they are not the only ones the spyware has been snooping on.

The investigation

The Pegasus Project is a ground-breaking collaboration by more than 80 journalists from 17 media organizations in 10 countries. The efforts are coordinated by Paris-based Forbidden Stories with the technical support of Amnesty International, which conducted forensic tests on mobile phones to identify

traces of the spyware. Around 50,000 phone numbers of potential targets have been leaked. These include heads of states, activists and journalists, including Jamal Khashoggi's family.

How it works

According to AI, Pegasus allows the hacker to gain access to messages, emails, media, microphone, camera, calls and contacts on the target's phone. Investigation has identified potential clients of NSO with clusters in 11 countries, namely Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Hungary, India, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Morocco, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Togo and UAE.

In India, the investigation is being done by The Wire.

Indian photojournalist killed in Afghanistan

#New Delhi

Danish Siddiqui, an Indian photojournalist associated with news agency Reuters in India since 2010, was killed on July 16 while covering a clash between Afghan security forces and Taliban fighters near a border crossing with Pakistan. Danish, 38, is survived by his wife Rike and two children.

According to the Indian embassy in Kabul, Danish died of multiple gunshot wounds. He was embedded with Afghan Special Forces in Kandahar. On the fateful day, he was covering the clashes between the Taliban and the Afghan security forces. The Taliban denied any role in his death and expressed regret over the incident.

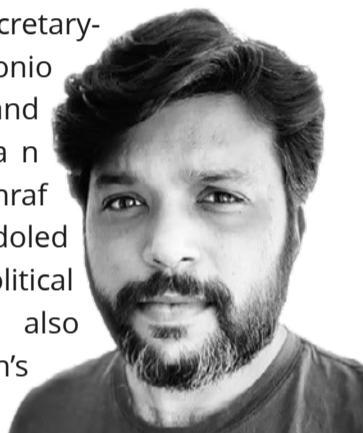
Danish was part of a team that was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography in 2018 for documenting the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar.

Danish had also chronicled the Nepal

earthquake of 2015, the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2019, the communal riots that coincided with then US President Donald Trump's visit to New Delhi in February 2020, and the Covid-19 pandemic in India. He had also extensively covered the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

He was laid to rest in the graveyard of New Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia, his alma mater, after his mortal remains were flown from Afghanistan on the evening of July 18.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani also condoled Danish's death. Political leaders in India also condoled Danish's death.



Guru Purnima: Celebrating the guru in our lives

Chandrakant Trivedi

Guru Purnima is very popular religious and spiritual day among Hindu community world wide. It is annually celebrated on full moon day of the month of Ashadh (Purnima; in July/ August). It is also known as Vyasa Purnima and Gyan Purnima. In Sanskrit, Gu means darkness of ignorance and Ru means light of knowledge. A guru is regarded as the supreme human who has attained this power through intense 'sadhana' and is willing to help his disciples and others. This year, Guru Purnima falls on Sunday July 25th.

Why celebrate

Chosen as the day to honour the teacher, Guru Purnima is when we express gratitude for all that we have achieved in the past year, and when we resolve to do what we are here for. Let us thank all the masters of the tradition who have preserved this Knowledge from ages and brought it to us.

Traditionally, Hindus pay tribute to Sage Vyasa as well as their spiritual leader on this day. Vyasa, the author of author of Mahabharata and son of Sage Parasara and Matsyagandha, was born on this day. He is believed to have started writing Brahma Sutras on Ashadha Suda Padyami that ended on this day.

This is also said to be the day when Lord Shiv became the 'Adi guru' or the first guru to the Saptarishi or the seven sages.

Source: Wikipedia



Covid case rise: India drops to 4th place

Thanks to the consistently declining figures of daily cases of Covid-19, India has now dropped to the fourth place in terms of new cases reported in seven days ending last Friday. At the top of the list was Indonesia with 3.24 lakh cases, followed by Brazil with 2.87 lakh. UK was at the third position with 2.75 lakh while India reported 2.69 lakh cases during this period. However, the active caseload is over 4.2 lakh.

G'nagar gets India's 1st airport-like rly stn

The next time you go to Gandhinagar, you might want to visit the redeveloped railway station that was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week. The premises, which gives the feel of an airport, boasts of state-of-the-art amenities, a five-star hotel, a centrally air-conditioned multipurpose hall, baby feeding room, prayer room as well as a first-aid room. Train-travelling be just one of the many features of this station, which aims to function as a city centre rail mall.



Govt cancels Kanwar Yatra after SC rap

The Uttar Pradesh government has announced cancellation of the Kanwar yatra this year, after initially giving it the go-ahead. The annual pilgrimage, which leads to one of the largest religious gatherings in the country every year, was called off after Supreme Court raised objection citing the likelihood of the third wave of the pandemic.



On Olympic Track

AR Rahman and Ananya show the Hindustani Way

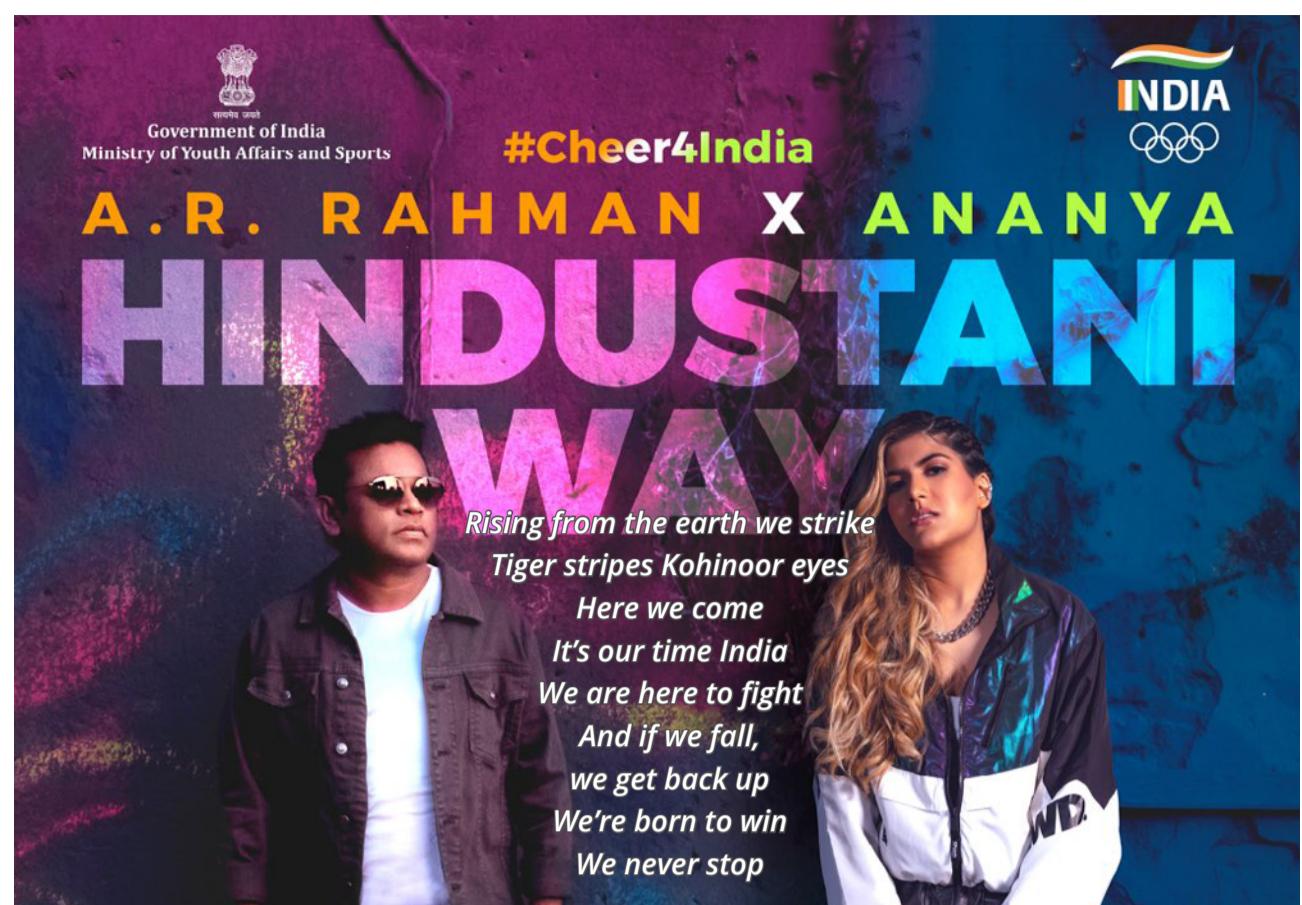
That's the title of the anthem the duo has prepared to cheer the Indian contingent at Tokyo Olympics 2020

#Mumbai

After weeks of anxious waiting, the Olympics week is finally here. The Games will kick off on July 13. The Indian contingent is ready. And, so is India... to cheer them as they put their best foot forward in the march to the medal podium.

Music legend AR Rahman has teamed up with singer-songwriter Ananya Birla to compose an Olympics anthem for the participants. It's titled 'The Hindustani Way'. Ananya has written the lyrics and sang the song, while Rahman has composed the music. The song was launched by Minister of Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur last week.

True to the mood across the country, the song is a peppy number that plays in the background as heartbeats soar at critical moments in matches. The viewers are treated to match-winning finishes by Indians from the



past Olympics, starting from Atlanta in 1996 and going on to Athens in 2004, Beijing 2008, London 2012 and Rio 2016.

One can see medal winners Leander Paes, Vijender Singh, Abhinav Bindra, Mary Kom, Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, PV Sindhu, Sakshi Malik, Dipa Karmakar and others in their winning moments. Remember Dipa's sensational Produnova vault? It had the entire country hold its breath. Those and many more such moments have been captured in the video.

Just feel the energy!

Michigan girl Vaidehi Dongre crowned Miss India USA 2021

Arshi Lalani, Mira Kasari named 1st and 2nd runners-up respectively

#New Jersey

Vaidehi Dongre's Instagram post, put up before she participated in the final round of the Miss India USA 2021 pageant, said she has always straddled between Indian and American culture and values.

Vaidehi (25), who is from Michigan, was crowned Miss India USA 2021 at the event held over the weekend. She was also crowned Miss Talented for her Kathak performance.

Arshi Lalani from Georgia was named the first runner-up while Mira Kasari from North Carolina became the second runner-up.

For Arshi, the win was even bigger, for she had faced many a hurdle on the way, including a brain tumour. "Winning this pageant....

feels like a dream. Because my state did not have a pageant let alone, a pageant director to support me," her post read.

Diana Hayden, Miss World 1997, was the chief guest and chief judge at the event.

There were 61 contestants from 30 states. They participated in three different pageants—Miss India USA, Mrs India USA and Miss Teen India USA.

Miss India USA is the longest running Indian pageant outside India.



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