

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



RIA JAIN SENIOR CATEGORY

And America's Best B'wood Dancer is...

Last week, FIA NY NJ CT hosted its annual Dance Pe Chance competition to find the best Bollywood dancer in America. The response was overwhelming, but the talent showcased was beyond words. At the end of the competition, held over two weekends, three best dancers were named as winners in each of the four categories. Junior category winner Ria Jain named 'America's Best Bollywood Dancer'

Full coverage on Pg 2, 3

Ode to Shiva, the Destroyer

Hindu temples in Tri-State region are gearing up to celebrate Maha Shivratri on March 11, in strict adherence to the Covid-19 protocol

Maha Shivratri falls on March 11 this year. The day is celebrated to honor Lord Shiva, the Destroyer among the Holy Trinity, alongside Brahma the Creator and Vishnu the Protector.

One popular and much-loved name of Lord Shiva is 'Bhole Nath', the lord who personifies simplicity and innocence. Yet, his fury can reduce the world to ashes.

According to Hindu mythology, Shiva is also described as 'anaadi, anant' the one without an origin or end.

Shivratri falls on the 14th day of every month of Hindu lunar calendar. However, the one in the month of Maha (Magh) is celebrated as Maha Shivratri.

The element of revelry is central to most Hindu festivals, but Maha Shivratri stands apart because of its introspective focus. There is full day (and night) fasting. Devotees throng



At Somnath Temple, Gujarat (Courtesy: Somnath Trust)

Shiva temples with milk, fruits and the sacred bilva (or bili) patra for the Lord.

Temples reverberate with sacred chants. Those who fast on the occasion stay up all night, praying to the Lord and meditating. 'Bhaang', an intoxicating preparation from cannabis, is offered as 'prasad' (both, in granular form and as a drink) to devotees on Shivratri.

In India, there are 12 'jyotirling', piers of radiance that represent Lord Shiva, located at 12 pilgrim spots. These are Somnath (Gujarat), Mallikarjuna Jyotirlinga in Srisailem, Andhra Pradesh, Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga, Madhya Pradesh, Baidyanath Jyotirlinga in Deoghar, Jharkhand, Bhimashankar Jyotirlinga in Pune, Maharashtra, Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu, Nageshwar Jyotirlinga in Dwarka, Gujarat, Kashi Vishwanath Jyotirlinga in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, Trimbakeshwar Jyotirlinga in Nasik, Maharashtra, Kedarnath Jyotirlinga in, Uttarakhand and Ghrishneshwar Jyotirlinga in Aurangabad, Maharashtra

In the Tri-State region, Mahashivratri is celebrated at many temples—Gayatri Chetna Center-Piscataway, Sanatan Mandir Parsippany, Hindu Temple at Garfield and Kearny Ved Mandir, Durga Mandir, among others. This year due to Covid-19 pandemic, certain restrictions may be applied. May Lord Shiva end the darkness in our lives!

Om Namah Shivaay!

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US inoculates 50 M in 37 days of Biden swearing-in

- Relief for H1-B visa holders: Green Card ban revoked

NASA's Perseverance on Mars to look for ancient life

- Indian-American scientist plays key role

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Filmi rain after months of drought: Several movies lined up for release in 2021

Big B 'just sitting there in oblivion' after eye surgery



FIA NY NJ CT wishes all its readers a very

Happy Women's Day





A glimpse from
Dance Pe Chance
2020

Lights, camera, action...

It's curtains on FIA NY NJ CT's 'Dance Pe Chance solo dance competition 2021'. Three best dancers were named as winners in each of the four categories. Junior category winner Ria Jain named 'America's Best Bollywood Dancer'

Unstoppable! That's how we describe the immensely talented dancers who set the stage of Dance Pe Chance 2021 on fire, virtually. Neither the pandemic, nor the absence of a physical stage could dampen their enthusiasm as they grooved to Bollywood tunes. 'It's a tough task', said our judges as they wondered whom to name the best. But the task had to be done.

Winners of the final round of the 37th edition of the annual Dance Pe Chance solo dance competition 2021, organized by the Federation of Indian Associations NY NJ CT as part of the 72nd Indian Republic Day celebration, were announced on February 23.

They were selected from across four categories of participants—minor, junior, senior and adult. Unlike previous years, there were no group performances this year due to Covid-19 concerns.

The event was organized over two weekends. The auditions were held on February 13 and 14, while the finals were on

February 20 and 21.

The contest started out with 200 participants in the auditions, of which 26 were selected for the finale. Celebrity judges for the final round were well-known Indian actress and dancer Sudha Chandran, South Indian actress and Kuchipudi dancer Laya Gorty and Bollywood choreographer Feroz Khan. Expert judges included choreographers and dancers Swati Vaishnav, Prashasti Majmundar and Anil Diwakar.

This time, the event was organized virtually due to the pandemic, but the excitement within the community was intact. Thanks to the efforts of the entire team and the enthusiasm of the participants, DPC 2021, also America's Best Bollywood Dancer, became the biggest online reality show in the country in Covid times.

This is the 37th edition of the DPC contests. So far, approximately 20,000 participants have showcased their Bollywood dancing skills on this platform.

"The response to DPC 2021 despite the Covid-19 pandemic has been overwhelming. We are proud of our team and participants for putting together such a wonderful program"

Anil Bansal, President of FIA NY NJ CT

"It was a privilege to see the sincere, and 100% voluntary, effort placed to showcase our community's talent. Congratulations to all the participants and kudos to the team."

Ankur Vaidya, Chairman of FIA NY NJ CT

"The performances were above par. All the participants are winners for coming out of their comfort zone and performing so well despite the limitations caused by the pandemic."

Saurin Parikh, VP of FIA NY NJ CT and DPC chair 2021

"We are happy that we could uphold our 37-year-old tradition despite the pandemic. In these challenging times, we needed to be innovative and improve our plans every day."

Parveen Bansal, Secretary, FIA NY NJ CT

Winners all the way

FIA announces winners of DPC 2021. The event, held over two weekends, was organized entirely online.

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Started nearly four decades ago, DPC has had approximately 20,000 participants till now, who have showcased their Bollywood dancing skills. This time, the event was organized virtually due to the pandemic, but the excitement within the community was intact. Thanks to the efforts of the entire team and the enthusiasm of the participants, DPC 2021, also America's Best Bollywood Dancer, became the biggest online reality show in America in Covid times.

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The Winners

Rayan Siddamsettiwar was adjudged the best in the minor category, followed by Nayan Nampally and Dhilan Shetty at the second and third positions

In the junior category, Ria Jain bagged the first prize, while Arya Prasad and Simone Shah took home the second and third prizes respectively. Ria was also adjudged America's Best Bollywood Dancer.

Keshav Agiwal was ranked first in the senior category. Diya Bhatt was at the second and Riya Chaturvedi at the third place in

the same category.

Among the adult participants, Shreya Baral got the first prize, with Kiran Kumar Jandhyala at the second and Carol Chettiar at the third place.

Wait begins for next edition

Applications for the next edition of DPC will begin on October 1 this year, FIA NY NJ CT president Anil Bansal announced.

FIA is celebrating its golden jubilee this year. "As part of the celebration, we will have \$ 5,000 as the first prize for DPC 2022," Mr Bansal added. He urged the participants as well as those who missed out this year to sign up for next year.



Junior category winner RIA JAIN of New Jersey was adjudged the Best Bollywood Dancer at DPC 2021



**MINOR CATEGORY AWARD 2021
RAYAN SIDDAMSETTIWAR
New Jersey**



**JUNIOR CATEGORY AWARD 2021
RIA JAIN
New Jersey**



**SENIOR CATEGORY AWARD 2021
KESHAV AGI WAL
New Jersey**



**ADULT CATEGORY AWARD 2021
SHREYA BARAL
New Jersey**



**MINOR CATEGORY AWARD 2021
NAYAN NAMPALLY
Texas**



**JUNIOR CATEGORY AWARD 2021
ARYA PRASAD
New York**



**SENIOR CATEGORY AWARD 2021
DIYA BHATT
North Carolina**



**ADULT CATEGORY AWARD 2021
KIRAN KUMAR JANDHYALA
Florida**



**MINOR CATEGORY AWARD 2021
DHILAN SHETTY
New York**



**JUNIOR CATEGORY AWARD 2021
SIMONE SHAH
Virginia**



**SENIOR CATEGORY AWARD 2021
RIYA CHATURVEDI
New Jersey**



**ADULT CATEGORY AWARD 2021
CAROL CHETTIAR
Pennsylvania**

■ Silver lining in Covid times

US inoculates 50 M in 37 days

President Joe Biden's announcement comes days after the country crossed the mark of half-a-million deaths due to Covid-19 infection

Last week, President Joe Biden announced the administration of 50 millionth dose of Covid-19 vaccine since his swearing-in in January. That's 50 million shots in 37 days.

The announcement came just days after a grim one—the number of deaths due to the infection had crossed 500,000.

"The more people get vaccinated, the faster we're going to beat this pandemic," Biden had said at a White House ceremony, noting that his administration is on course to exceed his promise to deliver 100 million shots in his first 100 days in office. "We're halfway there: 50 million shots in 37 days," Biden said. "That's weeks ahead of schedule."

More than 45 million Americans have been administered at least one dose of the approved vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna since they received approval from the Food and Drug Administration in December, with more than 20 million receiving both required doses. The President added that there would be enough vaccine for everyone who wants it. However, he pointed out that hesitance could limit the number of people who would want it.



"In five weeks, America has administered the most shots of any country in the world," - President Biden

"We'll have the vaccine waiting," Biden said, predicting it could happen in 60 to 90 days.

\$1.9T pandemic relief Bill gets House nod

The House of Representatives cleared a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief Bill, proposed by the Biden administration to revive the economy that has been hit hard by the virus. The Bill was passed on a near party-line 219-212 vote. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called a minimum wage increase "a financial necessity for our families, a great stimulus for our economy and a moral imperative for our country." She said the House would "absolutely" approve a final version of the relief bill because of its widespread benefits, even if it lacked progressives' treasured goal.

Relief for H-1B visa holders: Green Card ban revoked

President Joe Biden has revoked a policy issued by his predecessor Donald Trump during the pandemic that had blocked many Green Card applicants from entering the US. The latest move will benefit many Indians working in America on the H-1B visa.

Indian IT professionals, most of whom are highly skilled and come to the US mainly on the H-1B work visas, are the worst sufferers of the current immigration system which imposes a seven per cent per country quota on allotment of the coveted Green Card or permanent legal residency.

The H-1B visa, the most sought after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

NASA's Perseverance on Mars to look for ancient life

The space agency's rover landed on the Red Planet on February 18, the fifth so far; it will look for signs of earlier life, collect samples of rock and soil to be brought back

February 18 was a big day for NASA. Its fifth rover Perseverance successfully landed on the surface of Mars after "seven minutes of terror". Launched on July 30, 2020, through Rocket Atlas V (AV-088), it took nearly seven months to reach its destination.

During its primary mission, Perseverance will read the geological history of Jezero, the crater where it has landed, and look for any clues of life earlier. It will also select and cache rock samples that a future rover will fetch and return to Earth sometime within the next decade. So far, NASA has sent five rovers (robotic vehicles) to Mars, namely Sojourner, Spirit, Opportunity, Curiosity and Perseverance. The first successful landing on Mars came on July 20, 1976 when NASA's Viking

1 lander touched down in chryse planitia.

Perseverance is moving at about a speed of 1 km per second at an altitude of around 16 km from the surface of Mars. It is carrying seven primary payload instruments, 19 cameras, and two microphones. It is also carrying the mini helicopter Ingenuity, an experimental air craft that will attempt the first powered flight on another planet.



Raw images of the Martian surface transmitted by Perseverance (Courtesy: NASA)

Indian-American scientist plays key role



The moment Indian-American scientist Swati Mohan confirmed that Perseverance had touched the Martian surface successfully, the mood turned jubilant. The seven minutes before that had been nail-biting for them. The event marked a personal and professional high for her. She is heading the guidance, navigation, control operations of the rover.

The Indian Space Research Organization's Mars Orbiter Mission - Mangalyaan entered the orbit successfully on September 24. India became the first nation to reach Mars on its maiden attempt.

◀ Dr. Swati Mohan at work



**THE CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA NY
&
THE FEDERATION OF INDIAN ASSOCIATIONS NY-NJ-CT**

Celebrates

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

HONOREES OF 2021



Ms. Tejal Amin
Honoree of 2021



Dr. Abha Jaiswal
Honoree of 2021



Ms. Rashaana Shah
Honoree of 2021



Ms. Sabina Dhillon, Esq.
Honoree of 2021



Ms. Rashmi Aggarwal
Honoree of 2021



Dr. Uma Rani Madhsudana
Honoree of 2021



MASK SQUAD
Honoree of 2021

MON. MARCH 8th, 2021 | 3:00 PM.

Venue: Brooklyn Borough Hall - 209 Joralemon Street,
Brooklyn, NY 11201, USA.

info@fianynjct.org | www.fianynjct.org

Filmi rain after months of drought

Several movies lined up for release in 2021, starting with Jhanvi Kapoor and Rajkumar Rao-starrer Roohi next week; 'Gangubai Kathiawadi', '83', 'Satyameva Jayate 2', Brahmastra among others awaited this year



Like many other sectors, even the entertainment industry took a major hit in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The lockdown put locks on the doors of theatres, and when they were finally allowed to open, they were staring at numerous other issues. Despite cinema halls assuring total compliance with the Covid protocol, people were reluctant to enter the closed spaces over fears of coronavirus transmission. When they did start trickling in, there was nothing new to show. No new films were coming in.

2021 promises to be different.

There are several promising releases lined up this year. Jhanvi Kapoor and Rajkumar

Rao-starrer Roohi is set to hit the theatres on March 11.

Rana Daggubati's tri-lingual film will release on March 26. It is titled 'Haathi mere Saathi' in Hindi, 'Kaadan' in Tamil and 'Aranya' in Telugu.

Another multi-lingual film Salaar, starring Prabhas, will be released on April 14. Shot simultaneously in Telugu and Kannada, it will also be released in Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam.

Kangana Ranaut's 'Thalaivi', a biopic on late actress-turned-politician J Jayalalitha, will be released on April 23. It will share the date with 'Bunty aur Babli 2', a sequel starring Rani

Mukherjee from the original cast, Saif Ali Khan, Siddhant Chaturvedi and new comer Sharvari Wagh.

Akshay Kumar's Bell Bottom is scheduled for April 2 release.

Later in the year, Bollywood lovers will be treated to Alia Bhatt-starrer 'Gangubai Kathiawadi', which is likely to be released during Diwali. Shahid Kapoor's 'Jersey' is set to be released on November 5.

Aamir Khan's Lal Singh Chaddha has been tentatively slotted for December 24.

The much-awaited Brahmastra, starring Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt, is expected to be out this year.

Big B 'just sitting there in oblivion'

In latest blog, Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan opens up about his eye surgery; news of his deteriorating health had triggered concern among fans

There are few celebrities who can transcend the boundaries of fame and reach out to people on the other side who adore them, even worship them. One such person is Bollywood megastar, 'Shehenshah' Amitabh Bachchan. Recently, there was news of his health deteriorating. Turns out he had to undergo laser eye surgery for removal of cataract.

Recuperating from the surgery of one of the eyes, Senior Bachchan decided to reassure his fans, while also narrating his state of mind.

"... eye surgeries at this age are delicate and need precision handling .. the best is being done and one hopes all shall be well .. the sight and the recovery is slow and difficult so if there are typing errors they are to be excused," he wrote on his blog on Monday.

"The day passes with nothing to do ..cannot read cannot write .. cannot see .. so just sitting there in oblivion..."

However, his sense of humor was intact. Comparing his situation with West Indian cricketer Gary Sobers, he wrote, "... at a cricket match with a strong opponent WI was

not in a very good position and looked to lose the game.. Gary Sobers sitting in the dressing room and seeing the eventual, opened up his bottle of rum and had a few.. when his turn to bat came he went out and scored his fastest hundred .. when asked how did he do it .. he said when I went out I was seeing three balls .. I was hitting the middle one ..!!!!"

"My eye condition is somewhat similar .. I am seeing three letters for each word and hitting the middle button.." he added.



Voluntary Content
Compilation
FIA NY-NJ-CT and
Community Volunteers

Contributors
Chandrakant Trivedi,
Amit Yadav

Voluntary Graphics
Compilation
Gracia Marcom

Write to us!

Got feedback for us? We would love to hear about it. Have an event you want others to know about? Tell us. Clicked a pic worth sharing? Send it across. Your inputs are invaluable. You can mail your comments to

editor@fianynjct.org

You can also follow us on

@fianynjct.org

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