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FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

We are still reacting to the over One Million views to the 42nd edition of Dr VGP Talk Show that featured India's only Jewish Bureaucrat DR. PRASANTH KUMAR PONUGOTI, I.T.S., Deputy Director General Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications, Government of India, Delhi.

Yes, indeed a Spectacular Milestone. This incredible achievement is all thanks to our passionate viewers, and subscribers that have been with us every step of the way, your engagement and support have transformed our vision into a vibrant reality, making every episode a journey worth cherishing. We are a community that thrives on meaningful dialogue and shared experiences.

In this 32nd edition of Global Eye Magazine our Cover Story features Illinois's Rising Star Representative La Shawn Ford representing the 8th District of Illinois. Rep. La Shawn Ford game changing leadership has made him a most sought after dynamic leader that people want to follow. La Shawn Ford is a consummate leader, who is honest and communicates clearly. Ford's enthusiasm and energy are infectious. Ford is known to be approachable, relatable, and authentic. Ford fights for people, identifies problems and solves them while building up the young people around him to become leaders.

We have added the African News feature and Arab News Feature to our regular columns. Megha Bala,

our youth correspondent writes about the significance of Akshaya Tritiya as a celebration of boundless blessings. Our regular columns have been featured with interesting stories and articles.

We are encouraged by your "Letters to the Editor", which keeps us abreast of what articles interest you and the stories that you like. We welcome your feedback and do keep your letters coming. Kindly do provide your full name and name of the city when you send your email. Yes, the month of May is observed here in the United States of America as "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Heritage Month."



India is in the midst of its General Election for Lok-Sabha Parliament, which concludes on June 1 and the results will be known on June 4. We pray that the weather in India during this month would be bearable.

Our editorial team is working hard to provide wide coverage of news that interests all of you and believes in publishing enlightening articles in every edition. We would not have come this far without all of you, our readers.

Thank you !



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INDEX

TONI PRECKWINKLE IS UNANIMOUSLY RE-ELECTED HEAD OF THE COOK COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Page no.....03

CMC VELLORE BECOMES THE FIRST HOSPITAL IN INDIA TO HAVE STATE-OF-THE-ART AI-POWERED MRI SCANNER

Page no.....13

INDIA'S GHAZAL QUEEN RADHIKA CHOPRA TO HEADLINE IN CHICAGO ON MAY 18.

Page no.....19

CHICAGO ANDHRA ASSOCIATION'S WOMEN IN PURPLE EXTRAVAGANZA SUPER SUCCESSFUL

Page no.....23

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AKSAYA TRITIYA A CELEBRATION OF ENDLESS BLESSINGS

Page no.....25

PRACHI DESAI DECODES RESPONSE TO 'SILENCE 2': 'GOOD CONTENT WORKS ACROSS PLATFORMS'

Page no.....31

Toni Preckwinkle is unanimously re-elected head of the Cook County Democratic Party

Preckwinkle said she expects the Democratic Party will be united behind President Joe Biden as he seeks re-election.

As she easily breezed to another two-year term as the head of the Cook County Democratic Party, Toni Preckwinkle touted the dominance the party has held in local elections, but also foreshadowed the work to be done to unify the party behind Democratic President Joe Biden ahead of the national convention in Chicago.

Preckwinkle on Monday was unanimously re-elected chairwoman of the Democratic Party, a post she has held since 2018. She had no challengers as she was elected by 80 committee people, some voting by proxy. Monday's meeting was also a whisper campaign of sorts for candidates looking to replace the late Cook County Clerk Karen Yarbrough, who died earlier this month. In a brief victory speech, Preckwinkle touted how well Democratic Party-backed candidates did in the March primary, winning 21 out of 23 races — the best "win ratio" for the party in at least 25 years, she said. She acknowledged some narrowly defeated candidates, including Clayton Harris, III, whom she and the party backed for State's At-

torney. He lost to retired judge Eileen O'Neill Burke. Preckwinkle also made a nod to the preparation the party will take on for the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August, and November's general election.

"We want to make sure that Joe Biden wins big in November, not just in Illinois but by helping to support volunteers" in neighboring Wisconsin and Michigan, said Preckwinkle, who also runs Cook County government as president of the Cook County Board of Commissioners.

As a Democratic leader, Preckwinkle will be tasked with trying to mend division within the party. In an interview with WBEZ after her win, Preckwinkle didn't have specific plans on how to accomplish that.

"I expect we'll be united," she said. "We've got one reasonable person as a candidate for president and one madman. So, it's pretty easy for me." On Friday the Democratic Party is set to come together again to appoint Yarbrough's temporary replacement through December, and to pick who to be on the ballot in the general election to fill the rest

of her term. Yarbrough had more than two years left on her second term.

Preckwinkle would not say who she supports, but said at least three of the potential candidates eyeing the clerk seat are Cook County commissioners. Commissioner Donna Miller, who represents the south suburbs, was at the IBEW 134 hall Monday, circulating her resume and chatting up the county's top Democratic power players in attendance. Miller has made improving Black maternal health outcomes a hallmark of her efforts. Commissioner Kevin Morrison was there, too, taking the pulse of the committee people. "I think it is exciting to have an opportunity to not only be the youngest countywide official, but also the first openly LGBT countywide elected official as well," said Morrison, 34, who represents the northwest suburbs. "There's something exciting about a young queer person being able to not only be responsible for marriage licenses, but also to help bring more energy to our youth and hopefully get them to participate in our electoral pro-



cess." The Cook County Clerk oversees suburban elections, and the office also houses vital records going back more than 100 years, including birth, death and marriage certificates, as well as land deeds. Preckwinkle's uncontested win is perhaps a surprise to nobody — she has long been embedded in the fabric of local politics. She spent almost 20 years as a Chicago alderman of the 4th Ward on the South Side, then was elected Cook County Board president in 2010. She oversees a roughly \$9 billion budget that funds the county's social safety net, the courts, jail and public health system. As chair-

woman of the Cook County Democratic Party, Preckwinkle said in a recent WBEZ/Chicago Sun-Times interview that she uses her influence to help make the party more diverse and inclusive, from the Illinois Supreme Court to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago board.

She's a mentor to many who have ascended into higher office, from Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson to outgoing Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx and the current Illinois Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton. Kristen Schorsch covers public health and Cook County government for WBEZ.

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Dr. Barai's dedication to India-US relations is inspiring. His work on the nuclear treaty and Prime Minister Modi's visit was commendable.

- **Ananya M.**

"Arth Ganga's holistic approach integrates tradition, empowerment, and ecology, promising a sustainable legacy for the Ganga Basin."

R. Verma, Kolkata, India

Thank you for showcasing how AI is revolutionizing farming in Latin America. This serves as inspiration for other regions to harness technology for sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation.

Maya Patel, Glenview, IL

Beautiful Words - "The message on worry and peace is a gentle yet powerful reminder to live in the present moment. It encourages us to release anxiety and embrace the tranquility of now. Thank you for sharing these uplifting words."

Ravi Menon, St. John's, NL

"Shailaja Iyer's impact as a music educator extends far beyond the classroom. Her dedication to fostering a love for music and her inclusive teaching approach are truly inspiring."

Nisha Rao, Bolingbrook, IL

"Rep. Krishnamoorthi's investigation into the CCP's involvement in the fentanyl crisis is crucial. Bipartisan unity is vital to address the root causes of this epidemic and protect American lives."

Amrutha, Chicago, IL

Dr. Barai's life and achievements are truly inspiring. He deserves the title **Golden Boy.**

- **Reena R.**

"IIT Madras's Institute Day showcases their commitment to academic excellence and innovation. Recognizing achievers across diverse fields reflects the institution's

dedication to nurturing talent."

Meena Iyer, Ahmedabad, GJ

"The accomplishments of UPA in 2023 reflect their commitment to cultural celebration and community service. Their dedication to promoting Punjabi heritage is commendable and inspiring."

Simran Kaur, San Francisco, CA

Dr John K Vettath's story is a testament to the power of perseverance and the ability to overcome any obstacle.

"IIT Madras's Institute Day highlights their dedication to nurturing talent and promoting academic excellence. The recognition of alumni, faculty, and students reflects the institution's commitment to success."

Deepika Verma, Delhi, DL

"Rep. Krishnamoorthi's perspective on Prime Minister Kishida's address emphasizes the importance of US-Japan collaboration in countering CCP threats. Strengthening economic ties benefits both nations."

Daniel Kim, Boston, MA

"The United Punjabis of America's efforts to celebrate Punjabi heritage and serve their community are truly commendable. Their events and service initiatives reflect their dedication and passion."

Navdeep Kaur, IL

Dr. Barai's explanation of Israel's history is insightful. The right of Jews to a homeland deserves recognition.

- **David.**

"Congratulations to IIT Madras on their 65th Institute Day! The recognition of alumni, faculty, and students for their achievements is inspiring. Keep fostering excellence in education and research."

Priya Sharma, Chennai, TN

A peaceful resolution to the Israel-

Palestine conflict is needed. All sides must work towards dialogue.

Vikram B.

"Rep. Krishnamoorthi's advocacy against the CCP's role in the fentanyl crisis is commendable. Urgent bipartisan action is needed to address the devastating impact of illicit drugs on American communities."

Michael Johnson, Chicago, IL

"Arth Ganga's Arth Ganga offers a promising blueprint for Ganga's sustainable future, blending tradition with modernity."

M. Jain, U.P, India

I'm grateful for the informative piece on how AI is reshaping farming practices in Brazil and beyond. It underscores the importance of technology in addressing climate change and promoting responsible land management.

"Attending the recent performance by Shruthilaya students was a delight. Shailaja Iyer's passion for music education shines through in the skill and enthusiasm of her students. Kudos to her and the entire team!"

Suresh Ramanathan, Schaumburg, IL

"The comparison of friendship to a book is both poignant and insightful. It underscores the value of nurturing relationships over time. Truly thought-provoking."

Priya Patel, Chicago, IL

"Rep. Krishnamoorthi's insights on Prime Minister Kishida's address highlight the shared commitment to strengthening US-Japan ties. Economic and military cooperation are crucial for Indo-Pacific stability."

Sarah Lee, Chicago, IL

The recent article about the Greater Chicago Vedic Society and Meet Shailaja Iyer piqued my interest in Carnatic music. I'm eager to read more



on such topics in the future. Regards, **Mrs. Lakshmi Krishnan, Bangalore, India.**

Congratulations on publishing one more edition of your Global Eye magazine, I enjoyed your choice of subjects and diversity of topics covered. Lots of interesting readings there and your intellectual work is inspiring. You make a tough job look easy, it appears.

Bala Radhakrishnan, Aurora, Illinois

Wow, an Amazing Layout and read, it's Truly A Symphony of Excellent Available Awarding Exposure with what's Happening Globally.

Dr Gwen Appleberry, Chicago

There is nothing more delightful than receiving the Sunlight on your face or being caressed by the Breeze in the Spring. AND IT IS FREE, like everything that comes from Nature.

In the same way, Editor respected Dr. Vijay Prabhakar Ji, gives to the community, by sharing his talents, experiences, knowledge, qualities and skills. He shares everything altruistically, without expecting anything in return.

Rohit Joshi, Niles, Illinois

SHOWCASING COLONEL RUTH GREEN, A BLACK ASIAN U.S. COMBAT VETERAN.

Embark on a journey into the world of transformative gifts with Dr. VGP's Talk Show, reaching 42 million households globally, including 2 million in North America.

In this 43rd Episode of DR. VGP TALK SHOW, step into the awe-inspiring world of leadership and service with the remarkable Lt. Colonel Jennifer Ruth Green, a beacon of resilience, vision, and unwavering commitment. Lt. Colonel Green* mesmerizes our audiences with her multifaceted journey, adorned with tales of valor, entrepreneurship, and profound mentorship.

As the spotlight shines on this illustrious combat veteran, leadership instructor, and bestselling author, Lt. Colonel Green's narrative unfolds like



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj5xWALGboY>

a tapestry of inspiration, woven with threads of courage and dedication. From her valiant service in Operation Iraqi

Freedom to her entrepreneurial ventures and advocacy for inclusivity, her story epitomizes the epitome of exemplary leadership.

With each word she utters, Lt. Colonel Green casts a spell of empowerment,

urging viewers to embrace responsibility as the cornerstone of effective leadership. Her poignant anecdotes, drawn from the battlefield and the boardroom alike, illuminate the path towards clarity, authenticity, and enduring impact.

Lt. Colonel Green's ethos of mentorship and community-building resonates through every syllable, echoing the sentiment that true leadership extends beyond individual success to uplift and empower others. As she shares her pearls of wisdom, viewers are enraptured by her unwavering faith, insatiable curiosity, and adventurous spirit, which serve as guiding stars in her journey of service.

Additionally, Lt. Colonel Green serves as a senior advisor for Polaris National Security, where she advises senior leaders on national security issues and

advocates for an America that is strong, wins, and is held accountable.

Key quotes from Lt. Colonel Jennifer Ruth Green include: *

There's no point in blazing a trail if the trail doesn't become a road."

Leadership is a responsibility that one must take and own."

My decisions on that particular day managed to take place in a greater scope than just that day or that time."

We want to fight for an America that's strong, an America that wins, an America that's held accountable."

LT. COL. RUTH GREEN Let her words ignite the flames of inspiration within you, and together, let us forge a future fueled by courage, compassion, and collective progress.

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Dr. VGP: Hello and welcome to Dr. VGP talk show that reaches 42 million households, including 2 million households across America. In this episode of Dr. VGP Talk Show, you're going to meet a legislator of 18 years from the state of Illinois, who was born in Cabrini-Greens, to a teenage mom, and was brought up by his grandmother and was a teacher, educator, real estate agent, and today, the state representative for the 8th District of Illinois, State Representative LaShawn Ford. State Representative LaShawn Ford, in this interview, gives his insights into meaningful legislation which has come to fruition. Beat the marijuana legalization, the mental health crisis, and efforts the state and he himself is combating to make a difference, whether it's on the Appropriations Committee for Higher Education for the state of Illinois, which he chairs with a \$3 billion budget.

Education is the cornerstone for success, sustainability, and humanity. Watch this episode to learn about the innovative ways the state of Illinois and State Representative LaShawn Ford is focusing on tackling and combating the mental health crisis, the opioid crisis, and trying to bring education to all. Welcome to Dr. VGP talk show that reaches 42 million households, including two million across America. We are here today in this episode with a person of extraordinary passion, a man who delivers with force to his constituents, a legislator, a people's legislator for the last 18 years, who walks the talk and uses his office to make a difference in every man's life. Meet State Representative LaShawn Ford. **REP LA SHAWN FORD:** Thank you, Dr. Vijay.

Dr. VGP: Thank you, Representative Ford, for joining us in the midst of your busy schedule. I know we're in the last week of January, getting ready for the Black History Month, and you've done so many exciting things. Tell us, for our viewers, a little bit of your upbringing and growing-up days. How was eight-year-old LaShawn Ford? **REPLA SHAWN FORD:** Oh, my goodness. Well, first of all, let me just thank you for introducing me to your audience. It's an honor to be introduced to your audience, and it's an honor to work with you. You're efficient, and so I appreciate that you're very well prepared, and I really like working with you and your team. **Dr VGP:** Thank you. **REP LA SHAWN FORD:** It reminds me of growing up, how my family was very efficient in making sure that we got things

done, living on the West Side of Chicago. Growing up on the West Side, I was born over in Cabrini Green. That area right now is all gentrified, and people that were there in the 60s and the 70s probably cannot afford to live there anymore. We moved over to the West Side community now is Austin, the Austin community on the city's West Side, and went to school there, Catholic school for grammar school. Then I went to Catholic high school, Catholic university, studied to be a priest for a year, ultimately became a teacher for Chicago public schools, and then ended up selling real estate and being a legislator. I've been pretty blessed to have had the opportunities that I've had in life.

Dr VGP: It's very interesting to know that you've grown up to being a teacher, and then a real estate, and now a legislator. What were your parents? Who were your parents? **REP LA SHAWN FORD:** Dr. Vijay, I'd never met my biological father. My mother was a teenager when she had me, and she was young. My late biological mother was young when she had me, so I was adopted by my grandmother. I was raised by her on the West Side and It's been a lot of love poured into me from my grandmother and my aunts and uncles and family and community.

Dr VGP: A very interesting childhood, indeed, Representative Ford. I think that's what has given you the passion to deliver to your constituents, and with fire in your

belly, how you're approaching the mental health situation today, which is across America, becoming a crisis. Tell us about what entails the role of a state representative.

REP LA SHAWN FORD: I think it's everything that an elected official, a state representative makes it. You could do what the Constitution says is your responsibility, and that is simply to draft a budget, vote on a budget, and make sure that we keep government running. That's our job, constitutionally, a budget for Illinois. And to keep the government running. And to keep the government running. That's a huge responsibility. **Dr VGP:** That's a huge responsibility.

Rep La Shawn Ford: You have to make sure that the hospitals, the K-12 schools have funding, the public universities have funding, our roads and bridges are serviced, our public safety is protected. And so, all those things are the responsibility of the role that I have. But you also have the ability to make connections and collaborate with people to make sure that all these different areas flow and service most people with high quality services. And so, I meet with doctors, I meet with Presidents of Universities, meet with other elected officials across the country to make sure that we can provide best practices for the people in Illinois.

Dr VGP: Rep. La Shawn Ford, you serve as the chairman of a very important state committee, Appropriations and Higher





Education. And what is your budget you oversee in that?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

We almost have a \$3 billion budget for our Appropriations and Higher Education committee, which services the public universities in Illinois, like University of Illinois, UIC, of course, Northern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University, Western, and to name just a few. Governor's State and Chicago State.

Dr VGP:

I mean, that's huge. You're making a difference in educating the ones who need it the most.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

You know, people that go to our public universities should be commended for sticking with the state's public universities and making sure that they become a part of our workforce. So much so that as the chair of Higher Ed Appropriations, we have what you call a MAP (Monetary Award Program) grant, where if you need funding for public education, you could get a MAP grant and you will probably go to an Illinois school almost debt-free. That's what we aim for in Illinois, to make sure that our in-home residents have what you call a debt-free future for public education.

And so, we have that. We have an Aim High grant that people are able to realize. It sort of raises the income level because when you look at the MAP award, you have to be at a certain income threshold.

Well, our AIM-High raises it so that most people that have a sizable income, maybe making \$120,000 a year, will qualify for their children to get the AIM-High.

Dr VGP:

It's very interesting to note that all these funds are available for public education. How did you react as being as the state's chair on Appropriations with the Supreme Court overturning the affirmative action? Wasn't that a big blow to all the minority students?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

It's a big blow to higher education itself because what the affirmative action did, it really set the framework for what our higher ed community is about, making sure that we have diversity in our higher ed spaces. You know, colleges are supposed to be places where you go and examine who you are, change who you are for the better. And the only way you could do that is to have what you call diversity.

You cannot come from an environment that's not diverse, live your entire life in a non-diverse society, go to a public university or to a private university, and it's everything that you saw in your community when you were at home isolated. You know, how do you serve as a lawyer? How do you serve as a doctor?

How do you serve as a teacher? How do you serve as an anchor on TV? How do you serve the public if you don't have an understanding of diversity?

And so, to end the affirmative action at this point is premature because we know that there are still obstacles in the way of people getting into universities.

Dr VGP:

You know, you have led the challenge on the West Side and beyond on the opioid crisis. You set up a West Side Mental Health Task Force. Could you tell our viewers what all initiatives you have done in that direction?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Yeah. So, we have the West Side Behavioral Health Task Force that I'm happy to work with you on. We pulled together a lot of the MCOs on the managed care organizations to make sure that our partners, the providers, have the ability to make sure that their clients are insured and that the providers get paid from the state. So, we know that behavioral health is so critical. We often think of only making sure that people's physical health is okay, but we know that you have to have a strong mental and physical health in order for a whole person to be strong. And so we set up this Behavioral Health Task Force in conjunction with the West Side Heroin Opioid Task Force. The Heroin Opioid Task Force is something that we have as well.

And what we do with both is to deal with the individual's behavioral health and their substance use disorder. And so between the two, we hope we deal with the physical and mental

health of people struggling with substance use disorders.

Dr. VGP:

Representative Ford, one of your initiatives, bold initiatives, I would say, in the mental health field is you are introducing Narcan, vending machines which are available free of cost to the constituents, the people. Could you explain how that initiative came about and what are the big benefits for society?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Well, you know, the West Side Heroin Opioid Task Force that worked very hard for the last 10 years at educating people about overdoses and how to reverse an overdose from being fatal. And so, you know, between the city, the county, and of course, you have been a part of that movement to make sure that we disperse as much Narcan in the communities across the state as possible. And so, there's been lots of work done with the task force and with the city to spread Narcan out because we know that it is a sure lifesaver.

And so, the task forces across the state have decided that they're going to put up vending machines where you can actually get free Narcan for people that need it.

Dr VGP: Usually, it's given to those who overdose on phentolamine.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Yes. So, if you are a person and you're overdosing from fentanyl or some heroin, this Narcan will reverse that overdose and prevent it from being fatal if it's done in time. It's a sure thing. You can't be harmed from it.

It will save a person's life. In fact, there was a TV, the maker of Narcan was in one of the cities in America and he was getting his citizenship. He actually left the swearing in to get his citizenship and he was driving with his family, and he saw a person overdosing on the street.

He pulled over and he saved a person's life. Unbelievable.

Dr VGP: Absolutely incredible.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

And so, we hope that every household, regardless to whether or not you have someone struggling with a substance use

disorder, should have Narcan in their house, in their car, in case.

Dr. VGP:

Especially right now in the recent few years, in the last few months, 12, 15 months, there's a high incidence of young teenagers succumbing to it.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Oh, Dr. Vijay, you're right. I mean, the youngest have been eight, but the records show that people as young as 10 years old have overdosed. And you know something, recently we've seen where a baby was actually in an Airbnb and was crawling on the floor and there was fentanyl on the floor and the baby died.

And so had there been the reversal of Narcan in that house, the baby's life could have been saved. So, it was unbelievable. It's powerful.

So, the baby, whoever was in the Airbnb before the family, they must have had drugs, and it was powder, or some residue and the baby actually died from it.

Dr VGP:

Very tragic story. Now what is the answer to this, Representative Ford? Now I hear that you and other behavioral health agencies are planning on setting up overdose prevention centers.

That means you can take the drugs under supervision. Could you explain that concept? It's an international concept.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

You're right. It's international and it's done. I've visited Canada and I learned about this overdose prevention site in Canada where people actually bring their street brought drugs and they use it under supervision because what we don't want is people to use drugs alone.

If you use it alone, it's dangerous. And we want to provide a space where people could one, come and be protected. Two, come where they can get help if they want to go into treatment.

Three, find a job. If they're homeless, we can help them find a home. It's a medical setting.

Dr VGP:

So, a whole triad of services will be offered at that overdose prevention center.

Rep La Shawn Ford:





That's right. It's not just a place where you use drugs.

Dr VGP:

It's a wonderful, wonderful system to prevent overdose deaths and death crisis. Now, will the state fund it? How is it going to be a private public partnership?

How long would it take to get off the ground? Do we have an overdose prevention center right now functioning in your district or in Chicagoland?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

The state will fund it if we pass the law. Right now, we're working on it as house bill number two in the state. And I've been working on this bill for at least six years trying to pass it.

Right now, it's federally illegal to use drugs. So, law enforcement is opposed because that means that they have to turn a blind eye and recognize that this site here is a place where they're doing illegal drugs. So, you have to work with the law enforcement to make sure that they know that this is not just a place where people use drugs, but this is a wraparound service program here. And so, we're just waiting right now to pass the law in Illinois to make a pilot in Chicago. There's none in Chicago right now. We hope that we're able to pass a pilot, try it out.

If it doesn't work, we could eliminate it. But we know from New York, New York have saved thousands of lives, at least over a thousand lives have been saved in New York.

Dr. VGP: Having these.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

By having it. Yeah. And internationally, you will see in Germany, all in Canada, other places, they are lifesavers. It's the number one.

Dr. VGP: You love challenges.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

I love challenges. But this overdose prevention site it's the number one harm reduction tool that we have. And it has to be initiated ASAP. Yes.

Because more fentanyl is coming in. Right. And we need something to combat it to save lives.

Dr VGP:

Absolutely. And talking about house bills, you are a crown jewel in making innovative house bills. The marijuana legislation legalizing in the state of Illinois was passed with big fun fair.

But it was an insightful legislator like you who said, why don't we provide a quota for those who were incarcerated, the marginalized community to also benefit from this legalized marijuana? And you won a house bill on that, which was revolutionary, created history and provided entrepreneurship to those who would not have gotten it. Would you give us an update?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

You know, the war on drugs really terrorized certain communities and families. And so, the state of Illinois was one of the states that actually legalized marijuana and put some guidelines in place to make sure that we had social equity and allow for people that were impacted by the war on drugs to participate in it. So, our law said that certain communities that's been impacted had to have a designation for dispensaries to be in there.

And people that were impacted with a felony conviction had to be part owner and a dispensary for the business. And so, I think that that's great.

Dr VGP:

That is a far-reaching, innovative act, which is appreciated by one and all.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Yeah. You know, and it wasn't me alone. It was the state of Illinois, the governor, J.B. Pritzker, and many of my colleagues that

understood that if we were going to usher in a legalization of marijuana, that we have to make sure that we didn't leave those that were marginalized, ...

Dr VGP:

Marginalized, giving them an economic benefit too. And I think that worked well. How many licenses have been issued so far in the state of Illinois?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Well, it worked well. I think we have about 155 that we're working on, but it's still not working the way it should because we still have a lot of the minorities, women, black and brown, that's very struggling to upstart because you have to have cash money, you know, and in order to open up a dispensary, in order to open up a grow facility, you have to have cash because federally it's illegal and you can't go to the bank and borrow. So right now, it's pretty much a white male industry. I don't know where they get all the money from.

Dr VGP:

Talking about the other aspect, which you're also bringing about now, is trying to regularize mushrooms.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

You know, doctor, you should, I don't know how you feel about legalizing. Yeah, there has been, over the years, there's been a lot of negative understanding about mushrooms, the use of it. Right now, we want to use it as therapy. We don't want to make it recreational like we have marijuana. But psilocybin is a proven therapy that's used for behavioral health.

And we want to make sure that there are clinical settings where people could actually go in and use the drug to deal with their PTSD. We know that this drug helps people with life ending diseases to transition better. We know veterans.

Dr VGP:

Hospice care.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Yes, we know veterans have said that this has helped them with their PTSD. We also know that we work with some professional athletes that have brain damage and they've tried all sorts of medicines, the mainstream medicine, and it didn't work. But when they were able to get the therapy from mushrooms, it actually helped heal them. People that have been known to be suicidal, it's changed their lives. And, you know, Dr. Vijay, I believe there are more people using mushrooms than we know. But right now, it's illegal. We need to legalize it so that we make sure that people are protected with the product. Otherwise, people are using it and it's unprotected. It may not be.

Dr VGP:

You are, Representative Ford, a phenomenal legislator who's using the process of making bills and legislation to legalize this stuff, which, you know, we don't see. Rarely we see other legislators so involved in trying to make a difference in people's lives through innovative mechanisms. You also ran for mayor of the city of Chicago.





And if today you were the mayor of the city of Chicago with the immigrant problems, with mental health initiatives, what do you think is the real fix for the city of Chicago?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

This is a golden opportunity for the city of Chicago to fix poverty. I mean, this is a golden opportunity to say that we have an issue with homelessness. We have an issue with behavior and mental health. We have an issue with substance use disorder. We can't look at it as a migrant problem. We can't look at it as, we have to look at it as a holistic problem. And whatever money we spend, we spend it to fix Chicago and help everybody.

Dr VGP:

You see, you just gave such a powerful statement of possibility. If you ask anybody else, they say the city of Chicago is plunged into crisis. There's the immigrant crisis.

There's people, businesses leaving Chicago. But I think a lot to do with your positive outlook, Representative Ford, and from what your actions, which speak louder than your words, I think it's your grandmother's love. Which makes a huge difference, you know, and your education. Because politicians and leaders like you would make



a huge difference in solving crisis by the way you look at it.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Yeah. And I mean, this is so. I think that we also missed the golden opportunity with COVID. You were very involved with COVID.

We spent billions of dollars, trillions across the country on COVID. But did we really change the trajectory of people's health? No, we wasted a lot of money.

Dr VGP:

Yes.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

You know, and we don't have to do that with this issue of migration into the country. Because Congress will eventually fund the migrant crisis. That means money is going to come to the city of Chicago.

But if we're not ready to receive it, and if we're going to just use it for an isolated purpose, then we're going to miss the mark.

Dr. VGP:

Absolutely.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Poverty is the problem as to who's here.

Dr VGP:

You very well said it's a golden opportunity to fix poverty. Now, in your state representative district of the Austin corridor, what are the areas it covers?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Okay, so the eighth district that I've been serving for 18 years plus, is the west side, Austin. Then I have Oak Park, Berwyn, LaGrange, LaGrange Park, North Riverside, Riverside, Western Springs, Brookfield, Hillside. I have a very diverse district and I enjoy it. It's a real microcosm of the state and certain parts of the community have the ability to worry about green technology or speed limits, while some people have to worry about poverty and eating or gun violence. So, it's a very diverse district.

Dr VGP:

It absolutely gives you a fantastic breeding ground to use to be a governor.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

To be a governor.

Dr VGP:

Yes, exactly. You recently visited one of the, you're going international too, I see. You've recently visited one of the African



countries and I heard you're doing it for quite some time annually. Tell us about your international pursuit to how you're making a difference in Africa.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

You know, I'm so glad you asked that because we need to have conversations about Africa because many people, when you say Africa, people think it's a ugly continent, poor poverty. It is far from it. And I think that our understanding about Africa must be enriched because Africa is rich in resources, is rich in culture, and it's diverse.

You know, you have people from all over the world living in Africa. And so, I think that because we're so connected with the internet, we have a great opportunity to be more connected as human beings to help one another. There's so much knowledge in Africa, in the continent of Africa, and we can use it here in America. In fact, we're working right now on an exchange program with Mauritania.

Dr. VGP:

Mauritania, very interesting.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Yes, that's in Africa too.

Dr. VGP:

Is that the country you've visited?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Yes, recently I was in Mauritania. I've been in Ghana; I've been in Malawi.

I've been in many parts of places in the continent, but Mauritania is a very poor country, and they still have what you call slavery. They literally have people enslaved.

Dr. VGP:

You've got to be kidding, Representative Ford. This age, they still have.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Yes, and so we've been dealing with a group called abolitionists, and we're going to continue to go there to try to help them with the legal aspects to eliminate the enslavement. And so, we start

with empowering people mentally. And so, what we're doing is going to have, with our public universities here, an exchange program so that people from Mauritania could actually come to our public universities.

Dr. VGP:

You have such widespread and 18 years of legislative experience this year is an election year 2024. What's your take on the 2024 presidential elections?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

well, it's my hope that you know that we um I'll be a delegate for President Biden and so as a Democrat it's coming to Chicago the Democratic National Committee (DNC) will be here in August and so I hope that we can one listen to the people and look at the needs of the people and as Democrats respond to the needs of the

people so that we can have a stronger America. So, I'm a Democrat and Democrats help Republicans, the Democrats help people that are non-voters, Democrats help everybody. Our policies are inclusive and so my hope is that the Democratic party is not only inclusive but listen and respond to the needs of the people and I do believe that the best party is the Democratic party, that's why I'm a part of it and I know there's going to be a push between probably Biden and Trump.

You know elections have consequences and we spoke about the affirmative action being actually ended in America and how did it end? It ended

because Donald Trump as President actually changed it yes and so because

he did that now affirmative action is ended because we have a conservative court and so my hope is that as a Democrat that I continue to be a thorn in the Democratic establishment to listen to the needs of the people





the Democrat Party is the best party you know and there's room for us to grow. We listen to constituents more than any other party. There's no doubt that the Democratic party listens to the voters

Dr. VGP:

Do you think the Israel Hamas conflict or War which is going on will end soon any time?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

You know it's my prayer that the lives are saved and that when this conflict ends that the world is safer. That's my hope. It's really sad what's happening.

Dr. VGP:

We are very fortunate to have you. As I said earlier walks the talk, whose action speaks louder than who's changing the world one day at a time with mental health and now with he's entering influencing about gun violence. You know that gun violence has a lot of mental health it all stems from mental health issues from the drugs issues and he's tackling these issues to make Chicagoland and the suburbs of Chicago a safer Place state representative Ford you're an embodiment of knowledge that's it and so much of action you have given us and speaks louder than words. We have yet to see a more phenomenal legislator like

yourself who's making a difference in so many fields which are so critical to the survival of humanity. State Representative Ford, if you're given an opportunity to take three people out for dinner present or past who would they be?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

You know I would definitely have to sit at the table with Dr Martin Luther King. I would have to sit at the table with Bobby Kennedy okay, and Nelson Mandela.

Dr. VGP:

Great!

Rep La Shawn Ford:

I also you know if I could get you know how they always everybody always want an extra ticket you know I probably would love to bring FDR (Franklin D Roosevelt).

Dr. VGP:

Yeah, wow such a phenomenal person. So, our state representative Ford, if given an opportunity to take three people out for dinner it'll of course, will be Martin Luther King Jr the Civil Rights leader, King Bobby Kennedy, and Nelson Mandela and of course FDR.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Oh, you know what, I don't want to strike that but LBJ (Lyndon B Johnson) that's who I wanted. Johnson is the one, I mean we

could take FDR off with LBJ he's the one that really pushed the Civil Rights Movement had it not been for him, we would not have had.

Dr. VGP:

I totally agree with you, Chief. How do you spend, our viewers would like to know you know you're having such a busy schedule going down to Springfield for the sessions coming back to your expansive 8th District in Illinois State. How do you spend your spare time? Do you have any spare time? What are your hobbies and what games or how do you?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

I like to watch Tennis. I also like to, I don't like to work out but what do I do in my spare time work out, at my age, I'm try to do everything I can to stay healthy and and live healthy and take no medicine so that's what I like, I like to work once again I don't like to work out but I have a habit of working out so I'm very happy that I have a habit of working out and every day that I do it, I'm like oh, but I still do it every day.

Dr. VGP:

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Three words well let me see, hardworking man!

Dr. VGP:

Three adjectives, with compassion you know. It's hardworking could be one what are the other two adjectives?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

You know, I would say a Christian, a very dedicated father. I have a daughter that's 19, she's going to be a teacher and of course a family man at large with my entire family.

Dr. VGP:

Great Representative Ford describes himself as hardworking, a Christian and a dedicated father. He's the father of a 19-year-old girl who's very pleasant and we can look forward to as an educator and perhaps in the political as a rising star.

Dr. VGP:

In closing representative Ford what would be your message to our viewers?

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Yeah, I think the message is to your viewers, it seems to be, I think love is important regardless to who you are and and look at your neighbor, look at your brothers and sisters

with compassion you know. It's hard for people to accept what they don't know but I think that our lives are better when we at least try to get to know people so that we don't judge the book by its color and I think that makes all the difference it harms the world when we actually don't get to know our neighbors.

Dr. VGP:

Really wonderful to have state representative Ford you're known today as an inclusive leader, with and with emphasis on African American relations and history and we're so happy to have you here and wish you every best and all our support in your career as it rises wherever the Lord leads.

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Yeah, I mean are you leading me to India.

Dr. VGP:

Yes of course!

Rep La Shawn Ford:

Looking forward to it!

Dr. VGP:

Definitely! Thank you so much for joining.





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CMC Vellore becomes the first hospital in India to have state-of-the-art AI-powered MRI Scanner

Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore has procured a low-eld portable MRI scanner thAI-powered and can be moved from one place to another with the help of a joystick and power consumption of just 900 watts, equivalent to that of a coffee machine, the low- escanner does not require cryogenes.

A Hyperfine Swoop low-field portable MRI scanner was procuredrecently, making CMC Vellore the first hospital in the country to havethis state-of-the-art, AI-powered scanner; magnetic field of only 0.064 T,making it safer and more energy-efficient than traditional MRIscanners," the official X handle of CMC Vellore posted. "With power consumption of just 900 watts, equivalent to that of acoffee machine, the low-field scanner does not require cryogenes,



is easilyportable and can be moved from one facility to another, even to thepatient's bedside, using joystick control," CMC Vellore added. The CMC Vellore further informed that the scanner is currentlyapproved for research use in the country."Equipped with advanced image processing and deep learningalgorithms for producing high-quality MRI images, the scanner iscurrently approved for research use in the country," it said.

IIT Kanpur Tests Artificial Rain: What it is and now it Works

IIT Kanpur successfully tested the artificial rain technology over a limited area on its campus and also tested by different scientific bodies in water-starved regions of Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.

New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT-K) has been working on creating artificial rain through cloud seeding for over five years. The concept involves using chemicals to increase the chances of rainfall to help clear pollutants and dust from the air. Here's all you need to know about this technology.

What is cloud seeding

Cloud seeding, also known as artificial rain, is a weather modification technique to induce rains in water-starved areas. It is also used to disperse fog banks near some airports.

How does cloud seeding work

Scientists use aircraft to inject silver iodide, potassium iodide, dry ice (solid



carbon dioxide), liquid propane or salts into clouds to mimic ice nuclei.

Clouds often lack naturally occurring ice nuclei. So, injecting them with silver iodide particles (which are very

similar in structure to ice) and other substances increases the number of nuclei leading to rains.

How does cloud seeding or artificial rain happen

Injection of such particles makes clouds more efficient at generating ice crystals that either fall as snowflakes or melt to produce raindrops, depending on temperatures in and beneath the cloud.

The amount of rain or snow a cloud can produce depends on a balance between the number of ice nuclei inside it and the amount of water available to grow around those nuclei.

Where is cloud seeding tested in India IIT Kanpur successfully tested the artificial rain technology over a limited area on its campus. It's also tested by different scientific bodies in water-starved regions of Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.

India more than ready to take next step towards becoming science powerhouse: Nature

From 2014 to 2021, the number of universities increased from 760 to 1,113, in the past decade, Indian institutes of Technology have been established, raising the total ta 23. in the same period, two new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research were also established

New Delhi Science journal Nature has said thar India along with being a economic power is also more than ready to take the next step towards becoming a science powerhouse, as it called for a rise in the country's research and development spending, especially from the private sector. The prestigious British weekly said in its editorial headlined "How India can become a science powerhouse cited researchers to highillght that basic research has been neglected



by successive governments and that a thriving research system needs much greater autonomy. Along with being an economic power, India is also more than ready to take the next step towards becoming a science powerhouse. This is not yet a given, but it can happen," it said "In this editorial, we discuss a third aspects how to bridge the funding gap. One thing India's government can do is to boost science spending by encouraging businesses to contribute more, as is the case for other leading economies. If policymakers and industri-

alists can get this right, un opportunity to put rocket boosters under the country's impressive scientific achievements is there for the taking, the journal said. The editorial noted that in 20.21-22, according to government data, India had the world's third-largest pharmaceutical industry by volume and was the leading supplier of affordable medicines and generic drugs, some of which were "crucial to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic world-wide.

Last year, India became the fourth country ever to achieve a soft landing on the Moon and the first to land near the lunar south pole, it said, adding that the country also has the world's largest constellation of remote-sensing satellites. The magazine said India is among the world's most prolific countries in terms of research output after the United States and China. From 2014 to 2021, the number of universities increased from 760 ?? 1, ???. In the past decade, seven more Indian Insti-

tutes of Technology have been established, raising the total to 23. In the same period, two new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research were also established.

"Now consider that these gains were achieved by a nation that spent just 0.04 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) un research and development (R&D) during 2020-21, it said. Whichever political formation is elected to power in the ongoing polls, it must consider how to increase the country's R&D spending, as well as what could be achieved with more money, it said. Nature said around 60 per cent of India's research spending can be traced to central and state governments and universities, and around 40. them is often In 2022, the private sector contributed, on average, 74 per cent of OECD nations R&D spending and 66 per cent of such funding for the 27 mensbers of the European Union. India roday has many global companies In construction, information technology, manufacturing pharmaceuticals and more. They could be contributing a lot more to the nation's researchboth in terms of funding researchers and also infrastructure, said

Pritzker Administration Announces Illinois' Largest Annual Award for Permanent Supportive Housing

\$123 million in funding will create 14 life-changing, supportive housing developments for persons with disabilities and those at risk of homelessness

CHICAGO – The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) has announced more than \$123 million in state and federal resources have been awarded by the agency to finance permanent supportive housing throughout Illinois. Awarded under Round X of IHDA's Permanent Supportive Housing Development Program, this funding represents the largest ever annual award made by the State to fund housing and services for individuals at risk of homelessness, those living with disabilities, or other vulnerable populations. Funds will be used for the construction or rehabilitation of 14 developments containing 392 units of affordable housing that will be integrated with flexible supportive services designed to help residents maintain their housing stability, health, and independence. "Everyone deserves a safe and stable place to call home," said Governor JB Pritzker. "That's why Illinois is making historic investments in homelessness prevention and housing services. By financing 14 supportive housing developments statewide, we are strengthening our permanent housing infrastructure to help vulnerable communities access the holistic resources they need." The Permanent Supportive Housing Development Program was created to increase the community-based housing options available to vulnerable

populations and those leaving institutional settings. Developments funded through the program serve individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, persons with disabilities, veterans, justice-involved individuals, frequent users of emergency rooms, and other populations who face hurdles in finding and maintaining stable housing. These developments will provide residents access to a range of elective supportive services appropriate to their individual needs and preferences, including case management, health services and referrals, and employment resources. "Governor Pritzker tasked the Illinois Housing Development Authority IHDA, along with our partner state agencies, to help achieve functional zero for homelessness across the state," said IHDA Executive Director Kristin Faust. "We did not view this as a challenge, but an opportunity to do our part to increase housing for some of Illinois' most vulnerable. With limited resources, we strategically leveraged various funding streams to award the single largest permanent supportive housing round in our history. These developments will be transformative for the residents by providing stable, affordable housing with support and additional resources for growth and independence."

Permanent Supportive Housing Round X Awardees		
City	Development	Developer
Aurora	Las Rosas	Association for Individual Development
Bloomington	Sue's Landing	McLean County Center for Human Services
Chicago	Villa Guadalupe	Claretian Associates, Inc.
Chicago	East Garfield Park Homes	Chicago House and Social Service Agency
Chicago	Jonquil Terrace	Housing Opportunities for Women
Joliet	Hope Manor Village Joliet	Volunteers of America of Illinois
Moline	Parkview Apartments	Moline Housing Development Corp, NFP
Mt. Morris	Hill Street Neighborhood	The Village of Progress and Kreider Services
Peoria	Phoenix Manor (H3C)	Phoenix Community Development Services
Rock Island	Rock Island Veterans Housing	Community Home Partners
Rockton	Getty Garden	Winnebago Homes Association
Skokie	Impact Laramie	Impact Behavioral Health Partners
Springfield	Mason Street Apartments	Deerfield Reserve
Urbana	Hope Village (H3C)	The Carle Foundation

When evaluating applications for Round X, IHDA focused on five priorities including:

- Addressing inequities in housing,
- Advancing access for priority populations,
- Utilizing affordable housing infrastructure to promote access,
- Maximizing impact of new resources and programming by building partnerships and leadership capacity,
- Achieving functional zero for Illinois/accelerating development of PSH units.

"Phoenix Manor will transform the former Methodist College of Nursing building into 55 units of support housing for individuals experiencing homelessness," said Assistant Majority Leader David

Koehler (D-Peoria). "This development will bridge the gap between healthcare and affordable housing to reduce costs and improve the health of tenants with chronic illnesses. I applaud Phoenix Community Development Services and all those working to end homelessness." Financing for Round X was awarded from the Illinois Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the National Housing Trust Fund, American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the HOME Investment Partnership Program, and the Healthy Housing, Healthy Communities (H3C) initiative. H3C is a new funding opportunity that encourages strategic partnerships with hospitals, managed care organizations (MCOs), and insurers. H3C funds will support

two developments that have financial contributions from local healthcare providers and address community health inequities in Peoria and Urbana. "The state of Illinois needs more than 6,000 additional units of affordable housing for our most vulnerable populations," said State Representative Curtis Tarver, II (D-Chicago). "Developments like Villa Guadalupe will allow for those requiring supportive housing in southeast Cook County the ability to live independently while receiving the social services necessary to continue to thrive. The permanent supportive housing program is a great example of utilizing State resources to help break the cycle of homelessness, institutionalization, and crisis."

Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) Honors Hina Trivedi, President of GOPIO Chicago Chapter, with Global Community Service Award



The Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) celebrated its 35th Anniversary with a Global Convention held at the prestigious Royal Albert Palace in Fords, New Jersey, USA, from April 26th to 28th, 2024. Amidst a gathering of distinguished personalities and community leaders, Hina Trivedi, President of the GOPIO Chicago Chapter, was bestowed with the esteemed Global Community Service Award for her outstanding contributions to society.

As President of the GOPIO Chicago Chapter, Ms. Trivedi has demonstrated exemplary leadership and dedication in advancing the organization's mission of promoting the welfare and interests of people of Indian origin. Her unwavering commitment to community service and advocacy has earned her widespread recognition and admiration.

Ms. Trivedi's tireless efforts have led to significant positive impacts within the Indian diaspora community in Chicago and beyond. Through various initiatives and projects, she has worked tirelessly to uplift and empower individuals, fostering a sense of unity and solidarity among community members.

The Global Community Service Award

is a testament to Ms. Trivedi's exceptional leadership and selfless service. Her exemplary commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of others embodies the spirit of compassion and altruism that GOPIO strives to promote.

In acknowledging Hina Trivedi's remarkable achievements, GOPIO reaffirms its commitment to recognizing and honoring individuals who exemplify the organization's core values of service, leadership, and community engagement. As GOPIO continues its mission to foster unity and cooperation among people of Indian origin globally, it is individuals like Ms. Trivedi who serve as beacons of hope and catalysts for positive change.



Prince Harry and Meghan to visit Nigeria in May for Invictus Games talks



Britain's Prince Harry, The Duke of Sussex, left, and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, participate in The Archewell Foundation Parents' Summit "Mental Wellness in the Digital Age" as part of Project Healthy Minds' World Mental Health Day Festival, Oct. 10, 2023, in New York. Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, will visit Nigeria in May 2024 for talks on the Invictus Games, which he founded to aid the rehabilitation of wounded and sick servicemembers and veterans, a Nigerian official said Sunday, April 28, 2024. (Photo by Evan Agostini/Invision/AP, File)



Britain's Prince Harry, right, and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, arrive to a wheelchair basketball match at the Invictus Games in Duesseldorf, Germany, Sept. 13, 2023. Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, will visit Nigeria in May 2024 for talks on the Invictus Games, which he founded to aid the rehabilitation of wounded and sick servicemembers and veterans, a Nigerian official said Sunday, April 28, 2024. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner, File)

ABUJA, Nigeria - Prince Harry and his wife Meghan will visit Nigeria in May for talks on the Invictus Games, which he founded to aid the rehabilitation of wounded and sick servicemembers and veterans, a Nigerian official said Sunday. A statement from Nigerian defense spokesman Brig. Gen. Tukur Gusau did not say exactly when the Duke of Sussex will arrive in Africa, a place he has long said is close to his heart. Harry is

expected to make the trip after a service at London's St. Paul's Cathedral to mark the 10th anniversary of the games. Among the nations that participated in last year's games was Nigeria, whose military has been fighting a deadly war against Islamic extremists in the country's northeast since 2009. Modeled after the Warrior Games in the United States, the Invictus Games were founded by Harry in 2014 to offer wounded

veterans the challenge of competing in sports events similar to the Paralympics. Harry served in Afghanistan as an Apache helicopter copilot gunner in 2012-2013 and has championed veterans in need of assistance. His visit to Nigeria will include cultural activities and will "consolidate Nigeria's stronghold at the games and the possibility of hosting the event in later years," Gusau said.

GITAC to introduce prefabricated hospitals in Ghana

BY VIVIAN ARTHUR

The Ghana-India Trade Advisory Chamber (GI-TAC), established to promote trade, investment and cultural interactions between Ghana and India, is to introduce innovative modular hospitals made with prefab, to help address the country's health care system.

Modular hospitals are temporary emergency facilities built from prefabricated materials (reusable materials) and by transforming existing large spaces, such as warehouses, convention centres, and indoor stadiums which makes it a cost-effective solution during pandemics.

The move formed part of GI-TAC's activities earmarked for its 5th anniversary celebration slated for February 23 to September 21.

The president of GITAC, Mr Dominic Oduro-Antwi, at a media launch in Accra on Wednesday said the initiative would be held in June where a health fair would be organised to introduce the innovation. He said people would be brought from India, United States of America and Dubai to exhibit and teach Ghanaians about the innovation to help complement, and address the country's health care system in terms of



pandemic and disaster outbreaks. "This is to let Ghanaians know that there are other ways to make things work instead of always moving a whole minister to go and inspect a project. We can have something like the CHPS compounds and sick bays built from these prefab to complement our health care systems," he added.

Mr Oduro-Antwi said the Chamber was poised to empower the youth in medical tourism and agribusiness to help drive the economy. Recounting some initiatives of the Chamber in the year, he said it had supported the youth in diverse ways

through scholarships, and its knowledge bank initiative. The initiative he said was to shape and financially support students with business ideas in all fields to create more opportunities.

Mr Oduro-Antwi called on all stakeholders to come on board, as GITAC mark the 5th anniversary, to promote Ghana's trade in the African continent which was in line with the aim of the Global Africa Trade Advisory Chamber. A representative from the India High Commission and also member of GITAC, Mr Nazeer Khan, said his outfit was committed to collaborating with Ghana and GITAC to exchange ideas

for economic development. He said the introduction of the prefabricated hospitals would present an opportunity to transform Ghana's medical system. Other activities earmarked for the celebration of the anniversary include media engagement, educational fair, technology fair, musical festival in aid of maternal health care, launch of Global Africa Trade Advisory Chamber in Dubai and London and to be crowned in September with a durbar and agribusiness fair specifically for women in agric. The event is supported by GLI-CO Group and Ghana Investment Promotion Centre.

RIYADH: Riyadh's hosting of the World Economic Forum this week is a signal of the global business community's growing interest in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 reform agenda, Luigi Di Maio, the EU special representative for the Gulf region, has said.

WEF's special meeting on global collaboration, growth and energy for development took place in the Saudi capital on April 28-29 and was attended by 1,000 government, business and civil society leaders.

Di Maio, who is approaching his first anniversary in his role as EU special representative for the Gulf region, believes the choice of Riyadh as the summit venue reflects changing global perceptions of the Kingdom.

"First of all, the fact that the World Economic Forum, for the first time, is in Riyadh, testifies to the interest of the business community at the world level about the Vision 2030 program," Di Maio told Arab News on Tuesday.

"The ambitions, especially economic ambitions, of Saudi Arabia are totally changing perceptions of the Kingdom around the world. There is a business community that is more and more interested in these ambitions, in this vision, and in a new generation of dreamers in this country."

In a wide-ranging interview, which touched on EU-Gulf cooperation on Gaza, new visa rules for citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council area, and the establishment of a European Chamber of Commerce in Riyadh, Di Maio lauded recent strides in bilateral relations.

"The WEF was an important opportunity to have real and practical solutions for both sides," he said. "For instance, His Highness, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy Abdulaziz bin Salman, had a bilateral meeting with EU Commissioner for Energy (Kadri Simson).

"And after this meeting, they published a joint statement saying that they discussed and they concluded the discussion about the idea, in a few months, to sign an MoU about energy partnership, energy collaboration.

And this testifies, again, how much the World Economic Forum here in Riyadh was even a concrete and pragmatic solution, in order to have bilaterals resulting in MoUs, agreements and new partnerships between Saudi Arabia and the rest of the world."

During his tenure as special representative, Di Maio said, the bilateral alignment between the EU and Saudi Arabia has grown even stronger, with a particular focus on common security interests, particularly in the wake of the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack on Israel that sparked the ongoing war in Gaza.

"There is a strong alignment between European Union member states and European institutions and Saudi Arabia, but I would say



LUIGI DI MAIO
EU SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE GULF REGION

'WEF conference in Riyadh testified to growing global interest in Saudi Vision 2030

even the GCC countries about the two-state solution for the Middle East peace process," said Di Maio.

"But I would say that in particular, after Oct. 7, the awareness from our side of how much the GCC countries are strategic partners, not just for the contingencies, not just for what is happening now, but for the next decades is even more.

"This awareness is increasing a lot, not just at the member states level, but is growing around the world."

This is due in part to a growing recognition of the Kingdom's diplomatic and economic influence as a regional and global player, Di Maio said.

"Saudi Arabia is becoming more and more the point of reference because now it is implementing its vision for the region that is not just an economic ambition, but is a new policy and new initiatives in order to de-escalate, to make the region in peace and wind down on tensions like the tension that we are experiencing now.

"The partnership and the strategic partnership between the EU and GCC countries, in particular with countries like Saudi Arabia, is vital.

"For instance, last Monday in Luxembourg, we had the high-level forum of the ministers of foreign affairs between the ministers of the EU and Saudi ministers. Even Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan was in Luxembourg. "And we discussed several topics in an informal discussion, a very frank

discussion, where we understood more and more how much there is a common ground in order to build peace and stability for both regions, keeping in mind that Saudi Arabia's security is our security, and, if I may, our security is Saudi Arabia's security."

In particular, Di Maio said, cooperation on the Gaza crisis has brought the EU and the GCC closer than before, with joint work on ceasefire negotiations, humanitarian aid access, and the ambition to establish an independent Palestinian state.

"The situation in Gaza is not just about how to politically solve this dramatic issue, but even how to work together about humanitarian aid access," said Di Maio.

We have to do more and more about how to allow the entrance of trucks in Gaza and how to deliver humanitarian aid to the people there. And we are working a lot with Saudi Arabia and others in the GCC, like the UAE, for the corridor between Cyprus and Gaza, and Qatar for the negotiations."

"We are a team. At the beginning of this conflict, I was concerned about the situation, even, of our relations, the EU-GCC. But I'm experiencing that facing, together, this dramatic issue, we are even closer than before."

He added: "My perception is that we have to be optimists. We have to work hard on the ceasefire using all the leverage at the world level in order to bring closer the two sides in order to have this ceasefire.

"I think that, again, the countries of the region, like Saudi Arabia, but even countries like Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, the UAE, they are protagonists of this process.

"And only with the leadership from the region we will be able to have a sustainable ceasefire, because the Saudis are the only ones that are guarantors of a ceasefire about Gaza on their side, because they are very well, they know very well the dynamics of the region and how to avoid a new Oct. 7 and the new conflict in Gaza."

Di Maio used his interview with Arab News to announce the forthcoming inauguration of a new European Chamber of Commerce in Riyadh — the first in the GCC area — that will bring together Saudi and European firms to enhance trade and cooperation.

"I am very happy to announce here during this interview that next week, on May 8, we will inaugurate here in Riyadh the first ever European Chamber of Commerce, the first ever in the Gulf of the EU," he said.

"We've worked very hard with (Saudi Arabia's) Ministry of Investment, the Ministry of Trade. The EU delegation in Riyadh did a great job. And now we are going to inaugurate this chamber.

"That is in order to bring closer our companies, Saudi companies and European companies, in order to take on

both sides the new opportunities of the Vision program, but even of our new European Green Deal, Next Generation EU, and others.

"And there will be a very articulated board with several companies from Europe, the most important, among the most important ones."

Di Maio also highlighted the recent announcement of a new five-year multi-entry visa for Saudi, Bahraini and Omani citizens entering the EU.

"I'm very happy to announce that last Monday (April 23), the European Commission approved the five years visa cascade," he said. "That means that when a Saudi, for instance, citizen will ask for a new visa, will apply for a visa, the validity of this visa for multiple entries will be of five years, and not just one year.

"And it will be for Saudi people, for Bahraini people, and for Omani people. Qataris and Kuwaitis, they already had. Now all the GCC countries are aligned for five years. This is good news for the future.

"But we have a period of time where your citizens, your students, your entrepreneurs, your researchers, your tourists, can come to Europe without much bureaucracy."

Di Maio also took the opportunity to highlight a new collaboration between the EU and the GCC supporting young diplomats. "In mid-May this year, we will have the first ever young diplomats program," he said.

"That is a program where young diplomats from the GCC will come to Bruges in Belgium and they will have joint training and joint simulations with our young diplomats from the EU.

"In Bruges, there is the Diplomatic Academy of the EU. It is a new project in order to train European diplomats. And we will have a first ever project between the EU and GCC where your young diplomats will be trained and will be in simulations with our young diplomats. "It will be very important to explain better how it works, the complicated machine of the EU, but in particular, this is an opportunity to bring closer our diplomats, our youths.

"And I hope that these kinds of projects, like for the diplomats, will be opportunities for students as well, for young workers as well. We will work on this kind of people-to-people interactions because they are crucial in order to bring our societies closer. "And, if I may, as we bring our people closer, there will be less Islamophobia, less hate. And this is very important for our societies."



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Inauguration of India Pavilion by Amb Amit Kumar at the "Korea Pack & ICPI Week 2024", April 23-26, 2024 at Kintex, Seoul.

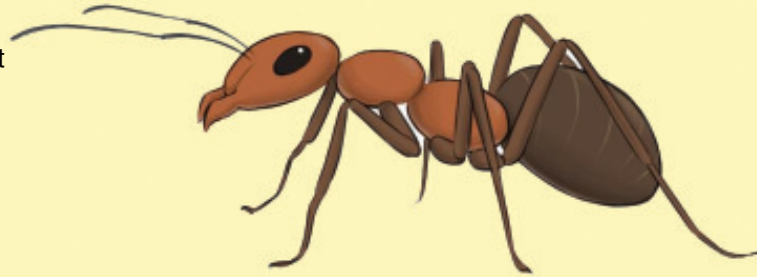


Ambassador Amit Kumar Inaugurated the #IndiaPavilion at the ongoing “Korea Pack & ICPI Week 2024”, comprising 60 Indian pharma & packaging cos. Interacted w/them, #Pharmexil, #IDMA, #IPPMI and assured facilitation for growth & expansion in the Republic of Korea.

LET’S LAUGH AWAY OUR STRESS WITH ANTS

1. 5 ants + 5 ants = Tenants
2. To bring an ant from another country into your country = Important
3. Ant that goes to school = Brilliant
4. Ant that is looking for a job = Applicant
5. A spy ant = Informant
6. A very little ant = Infant
7. An ant that uses a gun = Militant
8. An ant that is a specialist = Consultant=ØP
9. A proud ant = Arrogant>Ø—Ý
10. An ant that is cruel and oppressive = Tyrant
11. An ant that is friendly and lovely = Coolant
12. An ant that has changed from evil to good deeds = Repentant
13. An ant that accumulated so much food in summer for use in winter = Abundant
14. An ant that isn't willing = Reluctant
15. An ant that keeps financial account = Accountant
16. An ant that occupies a flat = Occupant

17. A huge ant = Giant
18. An ant that is important = Significant
19. An ant that has big legs = Elephant
20. A sarcastic ant = Mordant
21. An extremely fast ant = Instant
22. A noisy ant = Rant
23. An ant that doesn't keep moving = Constant
24. A dirty ant = Pollutant



25. An ant that annoys = Irritant
26. An ant that lacks knowledge= Ignorant

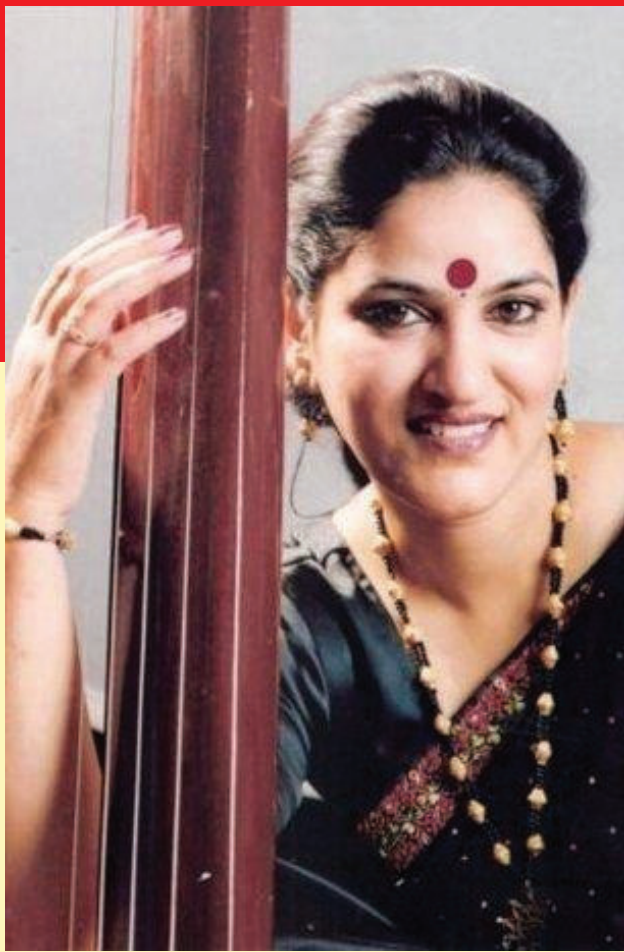
27. An ant that can take anything without complaining= Tolerant
 28. An ant that wastes resources= Extravagant
 29. A very careful ant = Vigilant
 30. An ant that maintains good odour = Deodorant
 31. An ant that finds it hard to move = adamant
 32. An ant that refused to move = Redundant
 33. An ant that is into business = Merchant
 34. A Political ant = Aspirant
 35. An ant that sues someone to court= Complainant
 36. A happy ant = Jubilant
 37. An ant that is patient - tolerant
 38. An ant that does not cooperate - recalcitrant
 39. An ant that doesn't agree easily - reluctant
 40. An ant that runs away from school unjustified -Truant
- Don't spoil the fun. Add yours
Best wishes to all English Language teachers...



In September of 2005, on the first day of school, Martha Cothren, a History teacher at Robinson High School in Little Rock, did something not to be forgotten. On the first day of school, with the permission of the school superintendent, the principal and the building supervisor, she removed all of the desks in her classroom. When the first period kids entered the room they discovered that there were no desks. 'Ms. Cothren, where are our desks?' She replied, 'You can't have a desk until you tell me how you earn the right to sit at a desk.' They thought, 'Well, maybe it's our grades.' 'No,' she said. 'Maybe it's our behavior.' She told them, 'No, it's not even your behavior.'

And so, they came and went, the first period, second period, third period. Still no desks in the classroom. Kids called their parents to tell them what was happening and by early afternoon television news crews had started gathering at the school to report about this crazy teacher who had taken all the desks out of her room. The final period of the day came and as the puzzled students found seats on the floor of the deskless classroom. Martha Cothren said, 'Throughout the day no one has been able to tell me just what he or she has done to earn the right to sit at the desks that are ordinarily found in this classroom. Now I am going to tell you.' At this point, Martha Cothren went over to the door of her classroom and opened it. Twenty-seven (27) U.S. Veterans, all in uniform, walked into that classroom,

each one carrying a school desk. The vets began placing the school desks in rows, and then they would walk over and stand alongside the wall. By the time the last soldier had set the final desk in place those kids started to understand, perhaps for the first time in their lives, just how the right to sit at those desks had been earned. Martha said, 'You didn't earn the right to sit at these desks. These heroes did it for you. They placed the desks here for you. They went halfway around the world, giving up their education and interrupting their careers and families so you could have the freedom you have. Now, it's up to you to sit in them. It is your responsibility to learn, to be good students, to be good citizens. They paid the price so that you could have the freedom to get an education. Don't ever forget it.'



INDIA'S GHAZAL QUEEN RADHIKA CHOPRA TO HEADLINE IN CHICAGO ON MAY 18.

Naperville, IL - Prepare to be mesmerized as the renowned Geet & Ghazal Queen Radhika Chopra takes center stage at the Yellow Box Theater on May 18th. This event marks her 4th tour of the US, promising an evening of enchanting melodies and unforgettable performances. Radhika Chopra's concerts are renowned for their sold-out shows in every city, and her upcoming performance in Naperville is set to be no exception. Fans in the Midwest have eagerly awaited this moment for over 6 years, making this concert a must-attend event. Accompanying Radhika Chopra are some of the industry's finest musicians, including Murad Ali Khan on sarangi, Nafis

Ahmed on harmonium, and Bobby Jutley on tabla. This ensemble promises to deliver a musical experience like no other, showcasing the beauty and artistry of Ghazals. Organized by 5e Events, known for its commitment to providing high-quality entertainment, this concert is set to be a night to remember. Tickets are selling fast, so secure yours now at <https://bit.ly/radhika2024> to ensure you don't miss out on this extraordinary event. For group bookings of 10 seats or more, call, text or WhatsApp Shivam at 312-399-3860 for a special discount. Gather your family and friends for an evening of pure musical bliss, as Ghazals are best enjoyed in good company.

Future Proofing India's 'pracheen kala'

To treasure classical music, dance and fine arts of south India, Pracheen Kala Kendra is in the process of associating with scholars and eminent artistes in Chennai



ducted 'Spandan' in Chennai, an evening where mesmerising rhythms wove a musical magic. "Spandan was our attempt to live up to our tradition of promoting, preserving and disseminating of arts and artistes and in furtherance of the same in every corner of India," states Sajal. The event began with a vocal recital by Iman Das. After this, he presented carnatic style based raga Sanmukhiya with self composed bandish Madhurdhawani suni in Rupak Taal. He concluded his recital. After this melodic performance, four eminent instrumentalists took the centre stage to present an ensemble of violin, flute, mridangam and tabla. Violinist M Narmadha, opened up with her solo, followed by flute performance by Chetan Joshi. Then all the four artistes Narmadha, Chetan, mridhangist MannarKoil Balaji and TablaMan D Chandrajith, presented the jugalbandi. Sajal explains that our Indian classical arts have powerful effects on a person's ability to be mindful, as it makes us more emotionally aware. "Art in any form also acts as an equaliser. It possesses the attributes



CHENNAI: Indian culture has been a bequest of collective memories of our society over the centuries. Treasuring our classical music, dance and fine arts were established way back in 1956. At present, we are imparting quality education and training under ancient Gurukul parampara in the subjects of Indian classical music, including Carnatic music (vocal and instrumental), classical dances (Kathak, Bharatnatyam, Odissi Dance), fine arts (painting), and conducting examinations in the field of performing and visual arts for the last 60 years," explains Sajal Koser, Secretary, Pracheen Kala Kendra. The organisation recently con-

ducted 'Spandan' in Chennai, an evening where mesmerising rhythms wove a musical magic. "Spandan was our attempt to live up to our tradition of promoting, preserving and disseminating of arts and artistes and in furtherance of the same in every corner of India," states Sajal. The event began with a vocal recital by Iman Das. After this, he presented carnatic style based raga Sanmukhiya with self composed bandish Madhurdhawani suni in Rupak Taal. He concluded his recital. After this melodic performance, four eminent instrumentalists took the centre stage to present an ensemble of violin, flute, mridangam and tabla. Violinist M Narmadha, opened up with her solo, followed by flute performance by Chetan Joshi. Then all the four artistes Narmadha, Chetan, mridhangist MannarKoil Balaji and TablaMan D Chandrajith, presented the jugalbandi. Sajal explains that our Indian classical arts have powerful effects on a person's ability to be mindful, as it makes us more emotionally aware. "Art in any form also acts as an equaliser. It possesses the attributes

that heal the mind, body and soul to make human beings a liberated soul," he highlights. Disclosing the future proposed activities in Chennai, Pracheen Kala Kendra secretary shares, "In future, the Kendra will involve its affiliated study centers based in south, specifically at Chennai, giving the local artistes as well as the young and promising students, a suitable platform to showcase their talent." The Kendra will certainly sprinkle its ideologies of an amalgam of cultural flavour to the already existing rich cultural com-

munity of our city. As a recognised examining body, the organisations curriculum includes south Indian music, vocal, instrumental and classical dances like Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi. By this, the students will get recognised diplomas awarded by the Kendra," explains Sajal. Pracheen Kala Kendra is already in the process of associating with eminent artistes and scholars for the accomplishment of aims and objects, thereby, giving momentum to the activities of the Kendra in the city of Chennai.

Chicago Public Schools Hosts Annual Mental Health Summit at Malcolm X College

**Silence DoGood
The Southland Journal**

Chicago Public Schools Hosts Annual Mental Health Summit at Malcolm X College (Chicago, IL) — More than 200 students and staff from across Chicago Public Schools convened at Malcolm X College today to break the stigma around mental health through workshops, wellness activities, music and more. CPS Chief Health Officer Dr. Sofia Adawy Akintunde served as a keynote speaker and participant along with other CPS team members. Saturday's summit is the second annual event and represents an early start to Mental Health Awareness Month in May.

"The Mental Health Summit highlights the District's commitment to the mental, social, and emotional well-being of our students and staff," said CPS CEO Pedro Martinez. "Mental health support and services are a critical part of the continuum of health resources the

District provides to help eliminate barriers to learning."

The Mental Health Summit, organized by the District's Office of Student Health and Wellness, aims to provide healing-centered and trauma-informed ways of supporting students and breaking the stigma around mental health, especially as the District continues to support students as they emerge from the pandemic and other trauma.

CPS has invested in additional staff, including counselors and social workers, to support students' mental health and well-being. The District has increased the percentage of social workers by more than 60 percent over the last six years and last year, the District won a \$15 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, which will in part be used to boost school social worker recruitment, hiring and retention.

The District has also made significant investments to expand Behavioral Health

Teams (BHT). BHTs are school-based professionals who identify students experiencing trauma to provide wrap-around support from the school and external partners. By the end of this school year, all CPS-managed schools will have a BHT.

"Mental health is a top priority of the District," said Dr. Adawy Akintunde. "The Mental Health Summit brings together our students and school practitioners, such as psychologists, counselors, and social workers, to strategize methods to improve mental healthcare in our District." In October 2023, the District won a \$415,000 grant from the State to improve post-pandemic student mental health care. The District is using part of that funding to collaborate with Rush University's Substance Use Center for Excellence to deliver training and professional development for staff around mental health and substance use, including opioid overdose prevention and

Narcan administration.

As of March 2024, CPS became one of the first districts in the nation to stock all 634 schools, including options, charters, and contract schools with Narcan, an opioid antagonist. As of April 1, the District has trained 66 percent of staff in overdose prevention and Narcan administration in collaboration with Rush University Medical Center through the Safe Schools platform.

Students like Jasmine Fong, an 11th-grader at Lane Tech College Prep, took part in planning and presenting the Summit. Fong presented on the topic of "imposter syndrome."

"Imposter syndrome is an internal experience of self-doubt and believing you are not as competent as others perceive you to be," said Fong. "I have worked through my struggles with imposter syndrome and want to help support and empower my peers to feel confident in their abilities too!"

DISABILITY NOT A HINDRANCE TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS

Cerebral palsy affected boy and a girl with amputated hand became first to appear for the SSC examinations with the aid of a computer

VIJAYAWADA: In a remarkable testament to perseverance, Ramannagari Bhargavi, a 15-year-old girl hailing from Tenegallu village in Ananthapur district, and Guru Swami, a 17-year-old student affected by cerebral palsy from Ananthapur, have etched their names into history as the first non-visually challenged individuals across the nation to undertake the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination with the aid of a computer, despite facing upper orthopedic challenges.

Bhargavi's journey began at the tender age of eight when she lost her right hand in an accident involving a peanut machine. Born into an agricultural family, she faced this life-altering event with unwavering determination, supported by her parents, R Sreenivasulu and R Kalpana, who themselves had endured the loss of their eldest son to brain fever. Despite the initial despair and medical recommendations of partial amputation due to infection risk, Bhargavi's spirit remained unbroken. Her enrolment in Class III at RDT Primary School in Kanekal village, marked the beginning of her courageous odyssey. Throughout her academic

journey, Bhargavi displayed exceptional dedication, transitioning to RDT High School in Raptadu village in 2018, where she excelled academically and garnered admiration from both peers and educators alike. Beyond the classroom, she demonstrated prowess in sports, particularly badminton, achieving commendable success at the state level and representing her state in para badminton Nationals.

Recently, Bhargavi achieved a historic milestone by becoming the first upper orthopedic challenge girl to sit for the SSC exam using a computer, securing an impressive 85.8% and emerging as the top scorer among special needs students. Her aspirations to pursue a career as a computer engineer from an IIT and excel as an international para badminton player underscore her unwavering determination to defy limitations and inspire others to chase their dreams.

Expressing immense pride in his daughter's accomplishments, R Sreenivasulu, lauded her confidence and resilience, recognising these qualities as instrumental to her success. Meanwhile, Guru Swami, a student at RDT High School, confronted his own set



of challenges stemming from cerebral palsy. However, through digital education and his proficiency in typing despite his unique finger condition, he defied expectations and achieved a remarkable 54.8% in the board exams, surpassing the minimum requirement of 10% imposed due to his disability.

His story serves as a testament to the efficacy of the

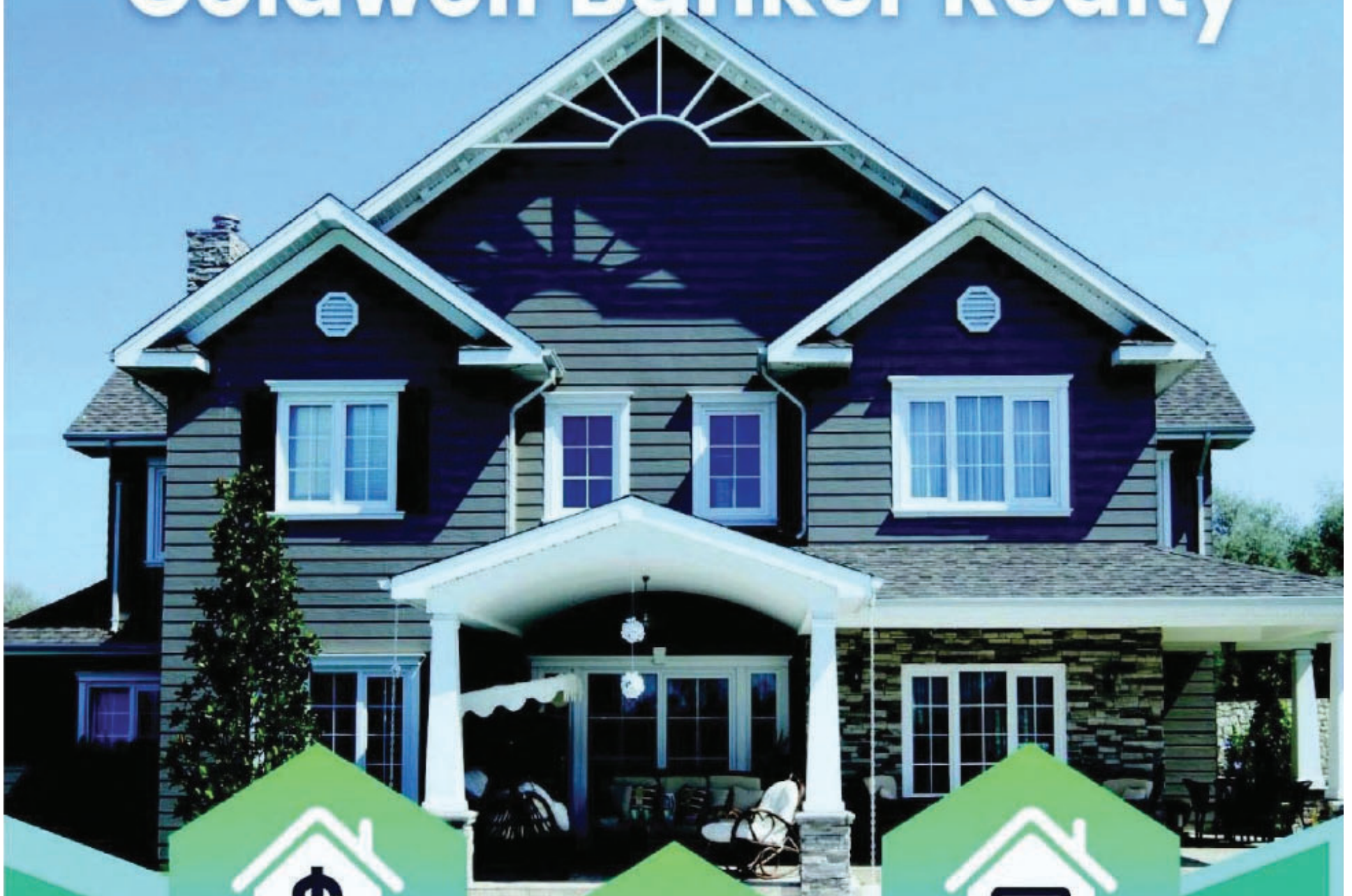
Vision 2025 Inclusive Andhra project and its digitally accessible pedagogy, with adaptive technologies such as sticky keys proving invaluable in facilitating his academic pursuits. "I have surmounted obstacles to realise my aspirations, demonstrating that determination transcends limitations. My family and I rejoice in my success in the SSC

examins, where I utilised computers independently. I am committed to continuing my educational journey," remarked Guru. Senior Advisor of Samagra Siksha echoed this sentiment, citing Bhargavi and Guru Swami as exemplars of the Vision 2025 Inclusive Andhra project and its commitment to fostering inclusive education through digitally accessible platforms.

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Glimpses of Shruthilaya's Annual Music Recital held at Prisco Community Center located in Aurora, Illinois.



The younger group of kids from Shruthilaya showcasing their talents at the Annual Recital.



Shruthilaya's Founder and Director, Shailaja Iyer introducing the young talent to the audience.



Capturing a section of the audience - parents' joy as they witness their children's spectacular performance.



Talented kids presenting an exclusive song!



Young talent performing along with the adult students.



"Harmonies in Bloom:"- Celebrating Talent!



Adult Students Shine Bright at the Annual Recital.



Shailaja Iyer, Founder of Shruthilaya, proudly observing her students' performances.



Collective performance of all the students was truly delightful.



Audience witness the talents of an entire family come alive in their captivating performance.



High schoolers exhibiting their talent.



Add this picture to adult students performance



Women power of CAA - women board of directors and Trustees.

CHICAGO ANDHRA ASSOCIATION'S WOMEN IN PURPLE EXTRAVAGANZA SUPER SUCCESSFUL

Chicago Andhra Association (CAA) celebrated International Women's Day on 9th March'24, at National India Hub under the leadership of President Swetha Kottapalli, Chairman Srinivas Pedamallu, Vice President Srikrishna Matukumalli, with immense support from sponsors and CAA members. The event attended by more than 400 ladies was coordinated by Gitika Mandala, Anuradha Gampala, and Soumya Bojja.

The theme for the event was "Purple color". All the ladies dressed up in Purple arrived enthusiastically for the event and had a memorable Women's Day!! The event comprised special Contests like enacting Ads from the 90s, making jewelry out of waste, decorating a doll, Fashion show, which attracted many participants. The competition created a sense of camaraderie and friendly competition among the contestants. Prizes were distributed to all the winners of the contests.

Raffles with first prize gift worth \$500 diamond jewellery were sponsored from Skanda Jewellers by Savitha and Raj Munaga. 4 Other Raffle prizes were a gift of sarees sponsored by Soumya Bojja from Vastram by Soumya, Saritha from Aakruthi fashions, Neelam from beautiful ideas and Swetha Kottapalli from Kalash Costumes. CAA's service wing, Chicago

Andhra Foundation CAF team executive director Savitha Munaga, and volunteers organized a Stall with handmade table runners, bags from the women empowerment project, along with earrings to raise donations for food drive. All the proceeds will benefit the Asha Jyothi Handicapped Welfare Society in India and a local food drive.

Sponsor Krishna Jasthi from Occasions by Krishna with the help and guidance of Tamishra Konchada decorated the venue beautifully. Stage Decor and the Photo Booth were the highlights of the evening.

Malathi Damaraju and Dr. Saini Narwade hosted the event and ensured that the audience were engaged/entertained throughout the evening.

Delicious Food was coordinated by Naresh Chinthamani and Srikrishna Matukumalli and many volunteers during the function and indeed, thanked by one and all. The attendees had the opportunity to savor the scrumptious meal from the local Indian restaurant Cool Mirchi.

Special thanks to Smt Sujatha Appalaneni who personally made Mysore Pak (a popular Indian sweet) which was relished by all.

Board of Trustees Sujatha Appalaneni, Dr. Uma Katiki, Dr. Bhargavi Nettem, Pavitra Karumuri,

Malleswari Pedamallu, and Sivabala Jatla participated in the event.

Surya Datla and Aruna Datla from Cosmos Digital provided photography and videography services for the event.

The program ended with an Open dance floor which was led by Mayuri from Nache Mayuri. Mayuri made all the ladies dance effortlessly with her instructions and foot-tapping numbers. All the ladies rocked the dance floor for long, tirelessly.

Overall, the celebration was a grand success. The organization's efforts in planning and executing the event were commendable, and they succeeded in creating a joyful celebration for all those who attended.

President Swetha Kottapalli expressed her gratitude to Harish Kolasani and the staff at the India hub for extending their support for the event. She also thanked board members, Savitha Munaga, Anusha Bestha, Sri Smitha Nanduri, Anvitha Panchagnula, Sailaja Sappa, Padmarao Appalaneni, Murali Reddivari, Narasimha Rao Veerapaneni, Girirao Kothamasu, Prabhakar Mallampalli, Kavyasri Challa, Manasvi Thumu, Trustees and many volunteers who helped wherever needed for smooth execution of this celebration



Board of directors and Trustees from Men, supporting Women's day celebrations



Women dolled up in purple for Purple themed fun day!

AJAY KUMAR MATTEWADA

'Master of miniatures' unveils another marvel

Ajay claimed that he ranks as the third person globally to craft such intricate miniature art.



HANAMKONDA: Pushing the boundaries of precision craftsmanship, renowned micro sculptor Ajay Kumar Matthewada from Warangal unveiled his new creation — a miniature sculpture of Lord Nataraja inside the eye of a needle, measuring 0.70 mm tall and 0.55 in width.

Crafted with meticulous detail and viewable only through a microscope, Ajay, aged 51, employed an array of materials including plastic powder, nylon fragments, soft wax, caterpillar hair for colouring, and even 24-carat gold.

Ajay shared that sculpting Nataraja Swamy's hair was one of the most difficult tasks. In the miniature sculpture, Lord Nataraja is seen trampling upon a demon shown as a dwarf (Apasmara), measuring 0.09 mm. He said that he spent over 145 hours over the period of three months to sculpt the idol.

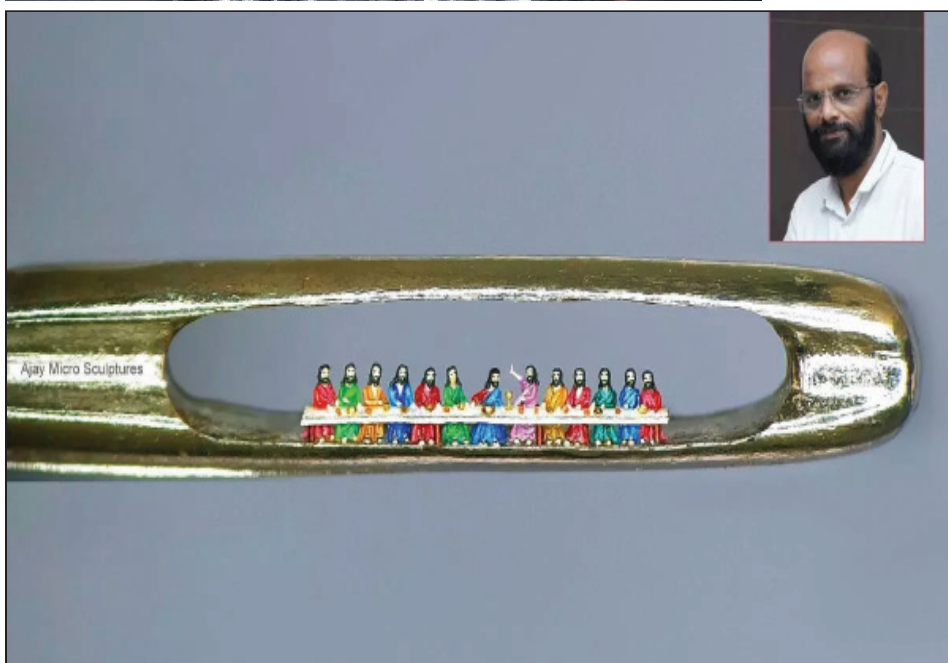
The artist's works will be showcased on a global stage at the 10th World Art Dubai-

2024, set to take place at the World Trade Center in Dubai from May 2 to 5. Amongst 400 artists from 65 nations, Ajay Kumar will present his collection of miniature sculptures, including the newly unveiled Nataraja Swamy masterpiece.

Ajay was born in Warangal in 1973 into a family of goldsmiths. He shared that he started learning to design jewellery and sculpt micro arts from the age of 14 from his father. nib of a fountain pen next to the micro art for comparison;

"Micro sculpting requires moments of breath-holding, as even the slightest disturbance can disrupt the delicate work of capturing finer details. Hence, I practise yoga and breathing exercises every day. This work requires an immense amount of focus, often to the extent of tuning out one's surroundings, despite the strain it places on the eyes and the headache it causes. I refraining from even blinking for long periods of time to ensure precision. The

tools I use are incredibly delicate and fragile, demanding skilled manipulation to craft these miniature artworks," he explained. Ajay claimed that he ranks as the third person globally to craft such intricate miniature art. His creations have garnered praise from current and former prime ministers PV Narasimha Rao, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Narendra Modi, as well as chief ministers and numerous other public figures. He acknowledged his wife Sravanthi, son Vaibhav Kumar, daughter Vaishali, and other family members as his primary critics, whose feedback he values greatly in honing his skills. Ajay shared that prior to embarking on a micro-sculpture project, he dedicates approximately a month to preparation by planning the design, materials required, size and visualising the end result. He said that he drew inspiration from renowned British micro-sculptor Willard Wigan, particularly his works created within the eye of a needle.



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AKSHAYA TRITIYA A CELEBRATION OF ENDLESS BLESSINGS

Megha Bala,
Youth Correspondent

The Significance of Akshaya Tritiya: A Celebration of Endless Blessings

Akshaya Tritiya, a revered festival in Sanatana Dharma, holds profound significance as a day of endless blessings and prosperity. The word "Akshaya" itself means endless, symbolizing the perpetual nature of the benefits garnered from virtuous deeds performed on this auspicious day. Whether it be Japa, Yagna, Pitra-Shraddha, or acts of charity, the merits acquired on Akshaya Tritiya are believed to endure eternally, enriching the life of the practitioner.

Astrologically, Akshaya Tritiya aligns with a celestial convergence of powerful energies. The Sun and the Moon radiate at their brightest,

while Venus occupies its most luminous position. This cosmic alignment creates a harmonic resonance, generating a wave of positivity and abundance that reverberates throughout the universe.

Delving into the historical significance of Akshaya Tritiya unveils a tapestry of sacred events and divine blessings:

- The auspicious day witnessed the commencement of the epic Mahabharata, as Lord Ganesha and Sage Ved Vyasa embarked on their monumental task of penning the great saga.

- It marks the birth anniversary of Lord Parashurama, the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and the divine manifestation of Goddess Annapurna.

- Akshaya Tritiya commemorates the benevolence of Lord Krishna,

who bestowed boundless wealth upon his devoted friend Sudama, epitomizing the spirit of generosity and compassion.

- In the Mahabharata, Lord Krishna gifted the Pandavas the divine "akshaya patra," a vessel that perpetually provided nourishment, ensuring their sustenance during exile.

- The sacred River Ganges descended from the heavens to the earthly realm on this auspicious day, sanctifying the land with its divine presence.

- Akshaya Tritiya holds significance in Jainism, honoring Lord Adinatha, the revered deity who embodies purity and enlightenment.

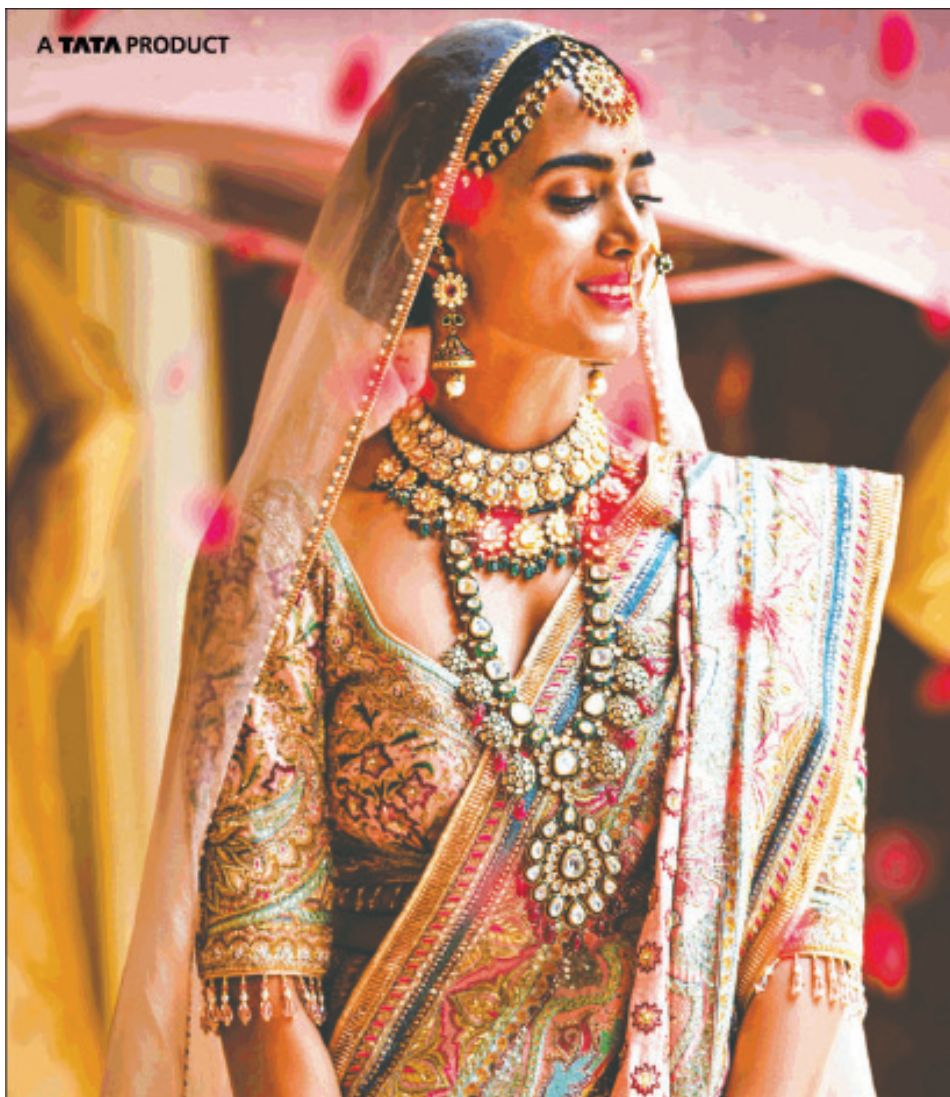
Legend has it that Lord Kubera, the celestial treasurer, received divine blessings from Lord Shiva and

Lord Brahma on Akshaya Tritiya, acquiring the prosperous kingdom of Alkapuri. This divine intercession renders the day propitious for investments in gold, land, and property, believed to flourish endlessly under the benevolent gaze of the gods.

Ancient texts and Vedic astrologers extol the virtues of Akshaya Tritiya, advocating it as a day devoid of malefic planetary influences—a pristine canvas for initiating auspicious ceremonies and ventures.

Akshaya Tritiya will be observed on May 10, 2024, this year. As the celestial energies converge and the echoes of ancient blessings resonate, Akshaya Tritiya beckons believers to partake in its sacred rites, embracing the eternal blessings it bestows upon humanity.

TANISHQ NAPERVILLE'S STORE IS OFFERING UPTO 20% DISCOUNT TO CELEBRATE AKSHAYA TRITIYA



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Southern Brazil has been hit by the worst floods in more than 80 years. At least 39 people have died



SAO PAULO (AP) — Heavy rains in the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul killed 39 people, with another 68 still missing, the state civil defense agency said Friday, as record-breaking floods devastated cities and forced thousands to leave their homes.

It was the fourth such environmental disaster in a year, following floods in July, September and November 2023 that killed 75 people in total.

The flooding statewide has surpassed that seen during a historic 1941 deluge, according to the Brazilian Geological Service. In some cities, water levels were at their highest since records began nearly 150 years ago, the agency said. On Thursday, a dam at a hydroelectric plant between the cities of Bento Gonçalves and Cotipora partially collapsed and entire cities in the Taquari River valley, like Lajeado and Estrela, were completely overtaken by water. In the town of Feliz, 50 miles (80 kilometers) from the state capital, Porto Alegre, a massively swollen river swept away a bridge that connected it with the neighboring city of Linha Nova. Operators reported electricity, communications and water cuts across the state. More than 24,000 people had to leave their homes, according to the civil defense agency. Without internet, telephone service or electricity, residents struggled to provide updates or information to their relatives living in other states. Helicopters flew continually over the cities while stranded families with children awaited rescue on the rooftops. Isolete Neumann, 58, lives in the city of Lajeado in the

Taquari River valley and told The Associated Press she has never before seen a scenario like the one she is now experiencing.

“People were making barricades in front of hospitals with sand and gravel. It felt like a horror movie,” she said by phone. Some people in her region were so desperate, she added, that they threw themselves into the water currents. Neumann’s own neighborhood wasn’t inundated, but has no running water and she hasn’t showered since Tuesday. She said she’s collecting rainwater in a basin to be able to cook. A clothing store she owns in the city’s central area is flooded, she added.

“I don’t even know how it must be. There must be nothing left.”

The downpour started Monday

and is expected to last at least through Saturday, Marcelo Seluchi, chief meteorologist at the National Center for Monitoring and Alerts of Natural Disasters, told Brazil’s public television network Friday.

On Thursday night, Gov. Eduardo Leite alerted the state’s population — known as gauchos — about the persistence of rains and floods. The situation was expected to worsen in Porto Alegre, he said.

“As a human being, I am devastated inside, just like every gaucho is,” he said. “But as governor, I am here steadfast and I guarantee that we will not falter. We are doing everything with focus, attention, discipline, and outrage, to ensure that everything within our reach is done.”

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva acknowledged the flood victims at a press conference on Friday alongside Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Brasília.

“The first words from Minister Fumio Kishida in the meeting we held were of solidarity with the people of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, who are victims by one of the largest floods we have ever known. Never before in the history of Brazil had there been such a quantity of rain in one single location,” Lula said.

Weather across South America is affected by the climate phenomenon El Niño, a periodic, naturally occurring event that warms surface waters in the Equatorial Pacific region. In Brazil, El Niño has historically

caused droughts in the north and intense rainfall in the south.

This year, the impacts of El Niño have been particularly dramatic, with a historic drought in the Amazon. Scientists say extreme weather is happening more frequently due to human-caused climate change. Karina Lima, a 36-year-old scientist and PhD candidate in climatology at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, told The Associated Press that the state is located in a region with certain characteristics that amplify El Niño’s destructive potential. “Models have long predicted that Rio Grande do Sul will continue to see an increase in average annual precipitation and extreme precipitation, meaning more concentrated and severe rainfall,” she said.



AMEC Team Gears Up for 13th ANNUAL CONGRESSIONAL AWARDS GALA SPECTACULAR GLOBAL COMMUNITY SALUTE



newsletters, and targeted outreach, ensuring maximum visibility and engagement leading up to June 1st. As the countdown to the event continues, the AMEC Team remains focused, motivated, and enthusiastic about delivering a successful and impactful experience. Their dedication, collaborative spirit, and attention to detail serve as a testament to their commitment to excellence in event planning. In conclusion, the AMEC Team's preparations for the June 1st event exemplify their passion for creating memorable experiences and fostering meaningful connections. With strategic planning, and a shared sense of purpose, they are poised to make June 1st a day to remember for all participants.

Mohita Sukumar
Chicago News Bureau Chief
GSA Global Eye,
Naperville, IL

As the calendar inches closer to June 1st, excitement brews within the AMEC Team as they gear up for a highly anticipated event. With meticulous planning and a shared vision of success, the team is leaving no stone unturned in ensuring a memorable and impactful experience for all participants. One of the key elements driving the team's preparation is thorough coordination and collaboration among team members. Regular meetings and brainstorming sessions have facilitated the exchange of ideas, enabling the team to fine-tune every aspect of the event, from logistics to content delivery. Logistical arrangements play a crucial role in the event's success, and the AMEC Team has formed sub committees with assigned members

that have been working tirelessly towards their assigned tasks. Attention to detail is paramount, ensuring a seamless and enjoyable experience for everyone involved. Moreover, content creation and curation are areas where the AMEC Team shines. From designing engaging presentations to sourcing inspiring speakers/presenters, every piece of content is crafted with the audience's needs and interests in mind. The team's dedication to delivering high-quality, relevant content sets the stage for a dynamic and enriching event. Technology also plays a pivotal role in modern event planning, and the AMEC Team is harnessing the latest tools and platforms to enhance the event experience. From virtual networking opportunities to interactive sessions, innovative technology solutions are integrated seamlessly into the event

framework. Furthermore, the AMEC Team recognizes the importance of promoting the event effectively to reach a wider audience. Marketing efforts encompass a mix of social media campaigns, email



INDIA'S CLASSICAL SINGER DIVA KAUSHIKI CHAKRABORTHY MESMERIZES HOUSEFULL AUDIENCE AT CHICAGO KALI BARI CONCERT



Singer Kaushiki Chakraborty and Violinist Ambi Subramaniam playing at the concert.



Harmonium player Jyotimoy Banerjee joins Singer Kaushiki Chakraborty and Violinist Ambi Subramaniam at the concert.

Chicago Kali Bari hosted a Thumri – on Sunday, April 28 at Glenbard Thillana Concert headlined by Indian's Number One classical singer Kaushiki Chakraborty who was accompanied by Violinist Ambi Subramaniam, Harmonium Jyotimoy Banerjee, Tabla Yashwant Vaishnow, Mridangam Akshay Anantapadmanabham and Ghatam Sowmiya J. Narayanam

South High School Auditorium, Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

Ambassador Somnath Ghosh, India's Consul General at Chicago was the Guest of Honor. Speaking to Global Eye Magazine, Dr. Ram Chakraborty, Founder – President of Chicago Kali Bari Temple said he was overwhelmed by the phenomenal

performance of the renowned artists and equally delighted by the encouraging support of over 700 devotees and supporters at this houseful show. Dr. Chakraborty who has devoted his entire spare time to the development of the Chicago Kali Bari Temple established in Glen Ellyn, Illinois in 2018,, emphasized that Kali Bari Temple is for all religions and not for any one religion. Dr.

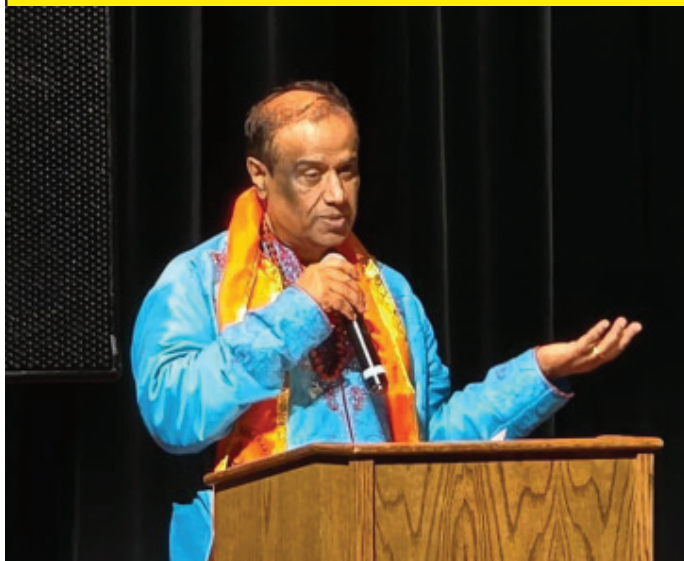


Dr. Tapas Dasgupta and his wife Kathakali Dasgupta congratulating singer Kaushiki Chakraborty for a successful concert.

Chakraborty is a successful pharmaceutical giant known for his simplicity and service to mankind over the years. Chicago Kali Bari is a Hindu temple and a center for religious worshipping, spiritual uplifting, learning, sharing and helping each other in Chicagoland. It is located at 25511 IL-53, Glen Ellyn, Illinois and is open all days from 9 AM to 9 PM. The temple organizes various religious, cultural events and also celebrates the Hindu festivals all year long. It is

a safe place to worship and meditate for all those who wish to develop their spiritual selves. Founded in 2018 by Ram Chakraborty, a prominent Indian American businessman, the Chicago Kali Bari is built to serve the goddess Kali. The daily and weekly schedule is available on their website and includes Goddess Kali pooja, devotional prayers, Lord Ganesha Pooja, Hanuman chalisa and much more.

For More information : <https://www.ckb.org>



The dynamic Founder of Chicago Kali Bari CKB Dr. Ram Chakraborty expounding on his vision for the CKB community township is working on establishing at Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

ISHITA SINGH, 2022 IAS TOPPER CONGRATULATED BY INDIA'S VICE PRESIDENT



Ishita Singh, IAS being congratulated by India's Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration at Mussoorie, India. Uttarakhand Governor Lt. Gen. Gurmit Singh and Sriram Tarani Kanti IAS, Director LBS National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, Uttarakhand, India looks on.



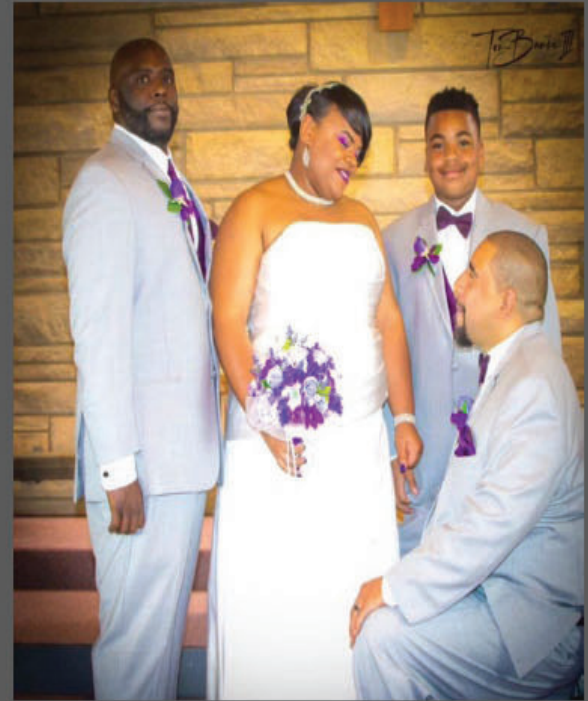
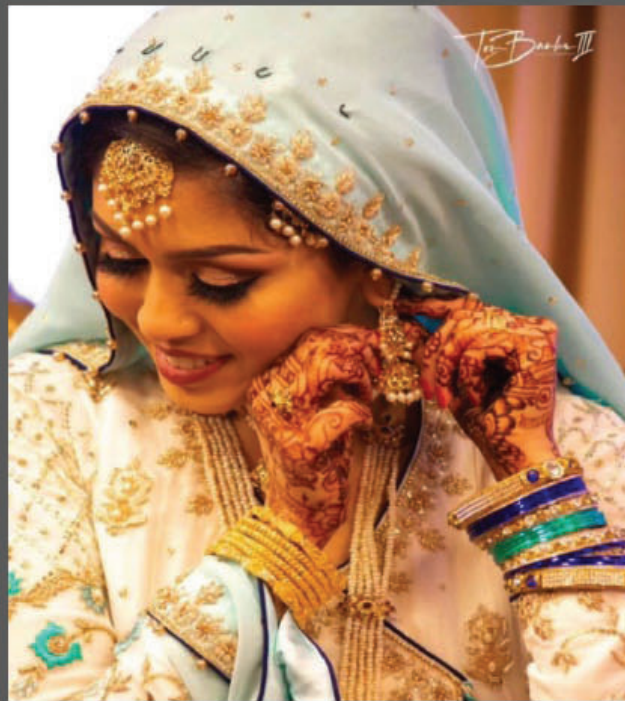
Ishita Singh, IAS receiving her first posting as Sub Division Magistrate (Trainee) at Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh from Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary D.S. Mishra IAS.

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Understanding India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA): Implementation, Controversy, and Implications



India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) has been a subject of intense debate and scrutiny since its passage in December 2019. Designed to provide expedited citizenship to persecuted minorities from neighboring countries, the CAA has sparked protests, legal challenges, and political controversies across the nation. In this blog post, we delve into the intricacies of the CAA, its implementation, the surrounding controversy, and its potential impact on Indian society.

The Genesis of the CAA:

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is a multifaceted legislation that intersects political promises, humanitarian concerns, and legal intricacies. Enacted in December 2019, it aims to fast-track citizenship for religious minorities—specifically Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, Christians, and Buddhists—from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, who have faced persecution in their home countries.

Implementation of the CAA:

Recently, the Indian government notified the rules for the implementation of the CAA, delineating the process for citizenship acquisition under this law. Notably, the CAA relaxes the documentation requirements, making it easier for migrants to prove their eligibility for Indian citizenship. Previously stringent criteria have been replaced with broader parameters, allowing a wider range of

documents to establish identity, religion, and date of entry into India.

Controversy Surrounding the CAA:

Despite its purported humanitarian objectives, the CAA has been mired in controversy. Critics argue that the exclusion of Muslims from the list of eligible religions raises questions of



religious discrimination and violates the secular principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The CAA has also been challenged in the Supreme Court, with petitioners contending that religion cannot be a basis for granting citizenship.

Potential Impact on Indian Minorities:

One of the primary concerns raised by opposition parties and rights



organizations is the potential marginalization of Indian Muslims under

Dr. VGP Speaks Out.....

the CAA. Critics fear that the CAA, coupled with the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC), could lead to the disenfranchisement and eventual deportation of Muslim citizens. However, government officials have refuted these claims, assuring that there are no immediate plans for implementing the NRC and that Indian Muslims need not fear repercussions from the CAA.

Implications for State Governments:

The implementation of the CAA has also raised questions regarding the autonomy of state governments in India. While some states have voiced opposition to the law and expressed reluctance to implement it, the CAA rules designate a central government-appointed body to oversee citizenship applications, potentially undermining the authority of state administrations.

Future Political Landscape:

With elections on the horizon, the fate

of the CAA hangs in the balance. Political parties are expected to leverage the issue to mobilize their respective voter bases, further intensifying the discourse surrounding the legislation. The outcome of the elections will likely shape the trajectory of the CAA and determine the course of future policy decisions.

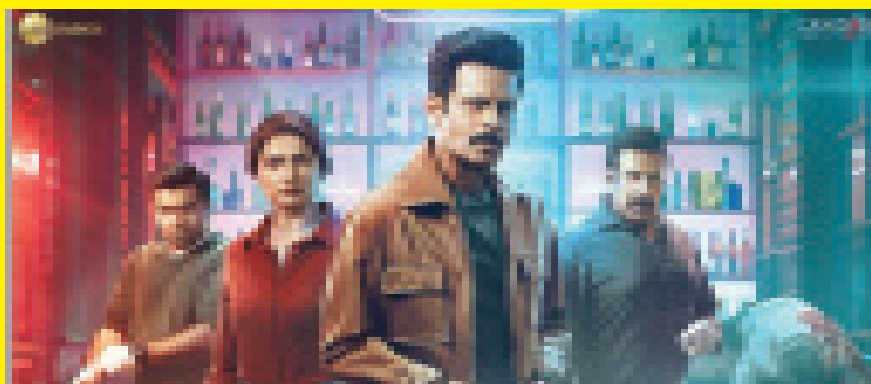
Conclusion:

In conclusion, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) stands at the intersection of competing interests, legal interpretations, and socio-political ideologies. While proponents tout its humanitarian objectives, critics raise valid concerns about its potential repercussions on India's secular ethos and constitutional values. As the nation grapples with the complexities of the CAA, it is imperative to engage in informed dialogue, uphold democratic principles, and prioritize the welfare of all communities. The journey ahead may be fraught with challenges, but it is through reasoned discourse and inclusive policymaking that India can navigate towards a more equitable and harmonious future.





Prachi Desai decodes response to 'Silence 2': 'Good content works across platforms'



Actress Prachi Desai, who is receiving a lot of positive responses to her recent release 'Silence 2', feels that good content works across platforms of the exhibition. "I think good and engaging content is platform agnostic. However content is being consumed via various platforms and tools and that's the reason why content is being tailored to suit them," she elaborated.

The actress believes that it's a wonderful time for everyone who is part of the entertainment industry as the opportunities are unlimited.

About 'Silence 2', the actress thinks that it cuts across the strata of audience because of its universal appeal.

She said, "It's a thriller and a murder mystery. I think films from this genre have a universal appeal. Also on OTT, people all over the world are looking for engaging content irrespective of the language. I think that's where 'Silence 2' scores highly".

About her process as an actor, she said, "I read the script and follow the director's vision. Whether it's a mystery thriller or a romantic film, I ensure that as an actor I know my character well, (and) I am on the same page as my director."

'Silence 2' is available to stream on ZEE5.

Naila Grrewal says partnership with Rohit Saraf in 'Ishq Vishk Rebound' elevated scenes

Actress Naila Grrewal has showered praise on her 'Ishq Vishk' co-star Rohit Saraf, describing him as a generous actor to work with. The actress said that their partnership has provided them with the opportunity to elevate scenes with greater nuance. Reflecting on their partnership, the 'Maamla Legal Hai' actress said: "Collaborating with Rohit Saraf has been a deeply rewarding journey for me as an actor. His remarkable talent, unwavering professionalism, and passionate commitment to his artistry serve as a constant source of inspiration." Naila said: "Our partnership has not only been incredibly enjoyable but has also provided us with the opportunity to ex-

plore and elevate our scenes with greater depth and nuance." "Rohit's generosity on set brings a unique energy to our performances, and his tireless dedication to his craft is truly commendable." 'Ishq Vishk Rebound' also features Pashmina Roshan and Jibraan Khan. The film serves as a sequel of sorts to 'Ishq Vishk', which marked the debut of Bollywood star Shahid Kapoor. Released over two decades ago, 'Ishq Vishk' depicted the tale of two childhood friends, Rajiv and Payal, portrayed by Shahid and Amrita Rao. 'Ishq Vishk Rebound' is directed by Nipun Avinash Dharmadhikari and is scheduled to hit theaters on June 28.



Shubhangi Atre says dancing helps her beat stress, gives her sense of freedom



Actress Shubhangi Atre, who is known for portraying the character of Angoori Bhabi in the television show 'Bhabiji Ghar Par Hai', is also a dance instructor, specialising in Kathak. The actress said that dancing helps her beat the stress and negativity and brings her a sense of freedom. Expressing her passion for dance ahead of International Dance Day, the actress shared: "Apart from being an actress, I am also an experienced dancer and instructor. Dance is an essential part of my identity."



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