

JAINA Convention 2021 to go global with virtual events lined up from July 1-6



Some of the confirmed speakers: (L to R) Acharya Ratnasundersuri Maharaj Saheb, Rashtrasant Gurudev Shree Namramuni, Pramansagarji Maharaj, Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai, Shri Gyanvatsal Swami, Brahma Kumari Sister Shivani

New York: The Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA) will be celebrating its 21st Convention on the Fourth of July weekend — from July 1st to 6th, 2021. Every two years, this premier event brings together 4000-5000 members of the Jain Community from across the world. This year, the virtual event is planned to be a global event and is expected to attract an even larger audience from USA, Canada, India, UK, Australia, UAE and many other countries.

In face of all the turbulence throughout the world in the last year, it is paramount for us to be vigilant, compassionate, tolerant and to “keep the faith”. Jainism, one of the ancient minority religions, has thrived worse than the pandemic based on its wisdom of Maitri (Amity), interdependence and, honoring and respecting life at any cost. The Convention will showcase its firm belief that spirituality enables us to sustain our sense of self and purpose through beliefs, principles, values, and morals. Hence the theme for this year’s Convention is “A Resilient Path to Peace”.

Convention Convener and First Vice President of JAINA, Haresh Shah of Delaware, proudly announced the start of convention planning with hundreds of volun-

teers from across the nation offering their contribution. The Convention Board and its several committees have been hard at work to ensure that this virtual convention is a once-in-a lifetime experience. The Convention will feature a state-of-the-art, user-friendly, and interactive conference platform with many features such as an online Main Hall, 6 Breakout Rooms, 4 Competition Rooms, and an Exhibition Hall.

Enlightening discourses, discussion tracks and activities planned at this Convention will offer attendees a deeper understanding of Jain principles and values while also helping our communities with a roadmap to bounce back. Youth participation, through JAINA’s affiliate organizations, Young Jains of America (YJA), Young Jain Professionals (YJP), as well as Jain Connect will be strongly promoted and encouraged. There will be focused programs for all age groups: children (ages 5-12), youth (ages 13-20), Jain Networking Forum (ages 21-29), and adults.

Other featured events include the popular Jain Academic Bowl (JAB), a jeopardy style vocabulary game in which young Jains compete with other teams, Jains Got Talent (JGT) and Tirth Bhav Yatra – A virtual Tirth Yatra of about 12 major Tirth

of India broadcast live.

Public Relations and Media Committee Chair Vipul Shah of Chicago proudly confirmed that spiritual dignitaries such as Acharya Ratnasundersuri Maharaj Saheb, Rashtrasant Gurudev Shree Namramuni, Pramansagarji Maharaj, Sadhvi Charitraarth Prabhaji and many others will enlighten with their wisdom during the Convention. While Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai Jhaveri will give the keynote address, other featured speakers include Shri Gyanvatsal Swami, Brahma Kumari Sister Shivaniji and Dr. Veerendra Heggade. The line-up of other prominent and inspirational speakers includes Dr. Christopher Miller, Dr. Steven Southwick, Rahul Kapoor Jain, Sonam Wangchuck, and Miki Chase.

The daily sessions and discussions will be well-complemented by refreshing Cultural Programs in the evening including Jain Drama, Jains Got Talent (JGT), and entertaining cultural performances from across the world. Virtual kiosks and Exhibition Hall round out the experience for audiences with varying interests.

For additional information about this convention and to register, visit : www.jainaconvention.org

Indo American Kashmir Forum condemns death threat to human rights activist Sushil Pandit

New York: Members of the Kashmiri diaspora in the US have expressed concern over the death threat to Sushil Pandit, a Kashmiri human rights activist in India, urging the Indian government to take a stern action against those responsible behind the plot to assassinate him.

Pandit is a human rights activist and the chief executive officer of Hive Communications India Private Limited. On Saturday, two men, who were allegedly hired to kill Pandit, were arrested in Delhi.

The Indo-American Kashmir Forum (IAKF), which seeks the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Kashmir Valley with guaranteed security and freedom to exercise their religious faith and cultural way of life without fear or intrusion, said in a statement on Sunday that the failed attempt on Pandit had once again highlighted the risks to the community’s secure life and liberty.

“The plot to assassinate Sushil Pandit, which was foiled by Delhi Police, is condemnable,” it said.

“This targeted plot is a grim reminder of the havoc brought upon the entire aboriginal Kashmiri Hindu community, who have been driven from their homeland in the Kashmir Valley through repeated pogroms over the past few centuries, most recently beginning in 1990,” the group, whose board members are Vijay Sazawal, Rajiv Pandit, Lalit Koul, Raj Koul and Rahul Pandit, said.



Sushil Pandit (Image courtesy: opindia.com)

The IAKF was established in 1991 to inform the world of the oppression against Kashmiri Pandits that led to their forced exile from Kashmir due to the influx of fundamentalist Islamic terrorism.

“While IAKF thanks Delhi Police for foiling this attempt, it also demands thorough and swift investigation of this plot, and expects Delhi Police and judiciary to expeditiously bring the masterminds of this plot to justice.

“IAKF also demands that the Ministry of Home Affairs in Delhi take this matter with utmost seriousness and immediately provide official security to Sushil Pandit, if not already undertaken,” it added.

Conservatives clash on Indian-American associate attorney-general nominee Vanita Gupta



Vanita Gupta (Image courtesy: wvntv.com)

New York: After President Joe Biden’s Indian-American cabinet nominee, Neera Tandon, the focus is now on Vanita Gupta, who is soon to face the Senate for confirmation as the third highest-ranking official in the Justice Department.

Conservatives are split on Gupta, a civil rights lawyer, with two groups fighting it out with TV ads — one rallying against attacks on her by another.

President Joe Biden has nominated Gupta to be the associate attorney-general and the Senate is to take up her confirmation — a requirement for senior administration positions — on March 9.

The first salvo came from the Judicial Crisis Network with an ad campaign accusing her of being soft on crime.

In a reference to the Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality that sometimes turned violent last year, the group’s ad said, “When our cities burned Gupta could’ve stood for law and order, for victims. Instead, she advocated to let convicts out of jail.”

However, it also coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic and her suggestion to release some of the low-level criminals only echoed that of former President Donald Trump’s Attorney General William Barr, who wanted to ease crowding in jails that could spread the disease.

According to media reports, the Network spent \$800,000 on the campaign.

Now, the Defending Democracy Together (DDT) organization is countering it with a campaign ad of its own that is on YouTube and is set to air on TV.

Urging her nomination, the ad said, “Don’t let Washington play politics with the nomination of Anita Gupta.”

It said that she “has been building bridges across partisan divides, she has the broad backing of law enforcement” and has

the support of leading conservatives.

DDT is a group of Republican conservatives who have opposed Trump. Its directors include former New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman and Linda Chavez, the highest-ranking woman among former President Ronald Reagan’s White House staff.

Gupta will need the support of all the 50 Democrats in the evenly-divided Senate to get her nomination approved — or will have to get Republican support if anyone from her party defects.

The Wall Street Journal reported that a petition against Gupta was being circulated by some Republican state attorneys-general.

Countering that campaign and the one by the Network campaign labelling Gupta soft on crime, three groups of law enforcement officials — Fraternal Order of Police, Major County Sheriffs of America and Federal Law Enforcement Officials Association have come out to support her.

During his Senate hearings Merrick Garland, who was confirmed as the attorney-general, faced hostile questions about Gupta from Republican Senator Mike Lee.

Garland vouched for her saying, “I regard her as a person of great integrity and a person dedicated to the mission of the department, particularly equal justice under the law.”

Gupta was the principal deputy assistant attorney-general and head of the Civil Rights Division in former President Barack Obama’s administration. She made her mark as a newly-minted lawyer by winning the release of 38 people, most of them African-Americans, who had been wrongly convicted by all-White juries on drug charges in a Texas town and also got them \$6 million on compensation.