

*“THE ACHIEVERS HONOURS HIGHLIGHT THE STRONG  
OUTCOMES THAT CAN ARISE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP”*

PRIME MINISTER RISHI SUNAK

  
**achievers**  
CELEBRATING OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION

# LIVING BRIDGE





National Indian Students and Alumni Union UK

## PARTNERS

Supported by



In association with



[www.SignatureHotels.com](http://www.SignatureHotels.com)





10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA



THE PRIME MINISTER

I am delighted to send this personal message for the India UK Achievers Honours programme taking place between 27-28 February.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for all that you are doing to champion the special UK-India partnership. I am pleased to see that, for the second year, you are showcasing the exceptional Indian talent that has been developed in the UK.

I am extremely proud of the UK-India partnership, and the 2023 Achievers Honours highlight the strong outcomes that can arise through partnership. I look forward to seeing the nominations for Achievers Honours 2024.



**03**

Message from the UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak



**10**

Dr S Jaishankar: Celebrating UK's strong human connect with India



**12**

Rajnath Singh: India - UK want strong strategic relations

# CONT

**14** Alison Barrett: The World's eyes are on India

**15** International education strengthens India-UK ties: UK Parliamentarians

**20** Indian laurels in Oxbridge crown

**22** Special Interview: British Deputy High Commissioner in Kolkata

**24** Lord Karan Bilimoria: Indian students in the UK are more significant than ever

**25** The Symphony of Success: The 2023 Achievers Honours

**57** Meet the Jury 2024



**30** I thought I would be living in London: Parineeti Chopra

**32**

Special Focus: The Future of Education

**58** Spotlight: Year of Wales in India 2024

**64** Diana Beech: London - Living Bridge to a successful future

**65** Achievers Honours Impact: How ETS - NISAU scholarships helped students

**70** Simon Emmett: The focus on India has never been more intense



**27**

Message from Dr Manmohan Singh,  
Former Prime Minister of India



**39**

Professor Luis Franceschi:  
Rethinking Education



**62**

Pam Gosal, MP: India has palpable  
ambition

# EVENTS

**72** Prof Tom Bewick: Celebrating  
mobility between India and  
the UK

**73** Forging connection: Shashi  
Tharoor, MP and Vivienne  
Stern at JLF

**75** Connecting mind and inspiring  
futures: Achievers Dialogues  
in India

**77** Dreams, debt, degree and a  
desired job: A helping hand

**81** UK-Jharkhand Chevening  
Partnership to help  
marginalised youth

**83** Elephant Whisperer: From  
photojournalism to saving the  
planet

**85** Tinkerpreneurs: Atal  
Innovation Labs in India



**88** Social Media can destroy your  
soul: Farhan Akhtar

**86** Loughborough: Where  
collaboration fuels innovation

**87** NISAU Events a resounding  
success

**90** From hospitality to student  
living

**91** A Period of Transition: Edvoy

**92** Stress about work and study:  
Chill with Chai

**41**

Meet The 2024 Finalists

# Foreword

It is with immense pride and a sense of responsibility that I welcome you to the India UK Achievers Honours 2024. At the heart of the Living Bridge lies the indomitable spirit of our Achievers. These achievers are not just recipients of a prestigious honour; they are the embodiment of the profound transformation that education and cross-cultural experiences can engender in our societies. In the words of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak: *the Achievers Honours highlight the strong outcomes that can arise through partnership.*

The higher education sector stands at a critical juncture. There are fundamental questions that the UK needs to address – starting with a critical one – what is our place in the world? In a post-Brexit society that is becoming multipolar and where old geopolitical mechanisms are no longer effective, the UK needs to redefine its role.

I envision us as an enabler of global good, particularly in science and technology, democracy and justice, climate action and green growth. The critical role that UK universities will play in this context cannot be overstated. It is incumbent upon the government to create an environment that enables these institutions to lead the charge in helping the UK carve out its new place. Here, the role of universities in nation-building and their obligations to students becomes pivotal. We must introspect: are we preparing a skilled workforce capable of meeting local and global needs? Are our graduates equipped with a growth mindset? Are we enabling a maximum number of them to become job creators rather than just job seekers?

I recently led the response of several investment managers to the Financial Conduct Authority's Value for Money regulations. If one invests even £1 of money into a UK fund, the regulator ensures that fund managers critically evaluate and publicly declare the value for money investors have received. That got me thinking – what of the return on investment for an



Celebrating Diwali 2023 with the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at No 10 Downing Street.

international student who is spending on average £35,000 per year on their UK education – they are investing not only money, but their dreams, aspirations, career trajectory, and quite possibly a lifetime worth of family savings or expensive debt. Where is the assurance that their investment is not just a financial transaction but a stepping stone to a brighter future? An urgent need to reflect on this return and ensure that we have everything we need to measure and report on it is imperative. You can't manage what you can't measure.

Speaking of job creation, I feel it is also incumbent on the UK's higher education sector to unite in helping the public understand the real value of international students to the UK. Reluctantly I have come to conclude that the average person on the street probably does not know what all of us in the sector take for granted – and that is why we must use every tool at our disposal to take the value of international higher education to every doorstep in the nation.

We must consider some hard facts:

1. The UK economy creates two jobs for every incoming international student.
2. The ecosystem of the university, located at the core of a region, serves as the backbone of that entire city

Sanam Arora is the founder and chair of the National Indian Students and Alumni Union UK (NISAU). She is also the chief architect of the Achievers Honours and a consistent voice championing international students in the UK. Professionally, she is a senior strategist in the Investment Management industry. For her work towards the welfare of young Indians abroad and promoting the India-UK educational relationship, Sanam has won numerous awards, including the prestigious PIONEER award for Outstanding Contribution to the Industry and the Honorary Studentship of the London School of Economics SU.



and town.

3. International students contribute a net revenue of £30 billion each year.

4. The education of domestic students and the globally recognised research that is conducted in our universities are financially supported by these international students.

International education exports are the best example of a nation doing well, by doing good. Yet the elephant in the room remains that despite being one of the few economic bright spots, this sector is at odds with the perception of international students as mere immigrants, getting ensnared in unnecessary political rhetoric.

The very choice of including students in net migration numbers is flawed. By design, students are in the country temporarily, with most going back after completing their studies. Now, they may stay on for two years to gain valuable real-world experience. Throughout their stay they more than adequately compensate for the services they consume, including via tax on income generated and surcharges for the NHS.

We live in a global world which is fighting for talent. International students must be extricated from the net migration targets and not be treated as political footballs. They are consumers with choices. They can and will go elsewhere if Britain does not offer them the environment and returns they seek. The stakes are high, for if we fail to attract them, we stand to lose not only economically but also in our ambition to be a global leader in science and technology.

We need policies and messaging that attract the brightest and best. Talent must not be limited for example by the inability to gain work experience or a chance to work and pay off some of the very expensive loans students take to study in the UK. I am deeply concerned by the uncertainty caused by the review of the Graduate route. After years of campaigning, the route brought the UK offer to the base minimum expected of a world-class study destination.

I welcome reviews into agent behaviour. For too long unscrupulous agent behaviour has often led to poor and disturbing outcomes for Indian students. It is my observation that most in our sector claim to be “student-first”.



Flagging off the “Madras Day Heritage Walk” in Chennai with the British Deputy High Commissioner Oliver Ballhatchet MBE.



Discussing Achievers with Sir Philip Robert Barton KCMG OBE, Permanent Under-Secretary, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Yet how many practice what they preach? The time is now right to establish an International Student Outcomes Authority that prioritises student welfare and value for money, regulates agent behaviour and penalises unethical behaviour across the value chain.

It is imperative that initiatives aimed at enhancing the sector actively involve those most affected by it—young people themselves.

The India UK Education Conference we have launched this year is our humble effort to move the dial on this and comes at a critical time. The questions we pose at this year’s conference are a prompt for introspection and a call to action, that we hope will shape the future of international education.

The Achievers Honours are a labour of love, delivered by passionate volunteers and enabled by a supportive ecosystem spanning governmental and non-governmental organisations. My gratitude to the NISAU team, the British Council, the Department for Business and Trade, ETS, our esteemed jury and all our partners and sponsors for enabling us to unite the UK-India corridor in identifying the Achievers class of 2024. I promise you yet another year of sheer wow and can’t wait for you to engage with our finalists.

See you at the honours  
Love,

*Sanam Arora*

Sanam

THE EDITORIAL TEAM

**Ruhi Khan**  
Editor

**Gitanjali Chandrasekharan**  
Designer

**Aishwarya Mishra**  
Publisher

Reporters:  
**Aishwarya Giri**  
**Anu Chaudhary**  
**Ashraf Nehal**  
**Chaitanya Marpakwar**  
**Jetal Zala**  
**Ruchi Hajela**  
**Shaurya Dev**  
**Varya Srivastava**  
**Vatsal Parikh**

Special thanks to all our experts  
for their insightful contributions.

For queries or to order copies of  
this magazine email  
info@achieversshowcase.com



With Prof. Luis Franceschi, Assistant Director General of the Commonwealth and Maddalaine Ansell, Director – Education, British Council.



With Alison Thewliss, MP.



With His Excellency Vikram Doraiswami, Indian High Commissioner to the UK, and Sujit Ghosh, Deputy High Commissioner.



With Gareth Thomas, MP and Shadow Minister (International Trade).



With Priti Patel, MP and former Home Secretary.



Introducing the magazine at the 2023 gala ceremony.



# Want to know the Future of Education? Come on board our Time Machine



Ruhi Khan FRSA, is the editor of the Living Bridge and Head of Strategic Communications at NISAU. She is an ESRC researcher at the London School of Economics where she teaches a course on Data in Society and is also the editor of the LSE Media blog. Ruhi is an award-winning journalist and columnist for news media in India and the UK. She has been invited by universities, academic conferences, think tanks and policy groups to deliver lectures and take part in panel discussions and roundtables on media, gender, technology, and India-UK relations. She is also the author of Escaped: True Stories of Indian Fugitives in London and is working on a monograph on Feminism and AI.

---

**Edtech disruptions and human connections are changing the nature of education.**

---

*'We all have our time machines, don't we? Those that take us back are memories and those that carry us forward are dreams,' said the prolific English writer H G Wells when he introduced us to the idea of time travel, a seemingly impossible concept that, let's admit it, we secretly wish is a possibility. This edition of the Living Bridge is an ode to the time machine, flagged off by PM Rishi Sunak, as we delve into memories and build on dreams. Memories we cherish and learn from, dreams we set as goals and convert into reality.*

*So, buckle up as we first dig through the historical sands of time to unravel the wonderful imprints that Indians left on the English lands, embedded deep and often forgotten until the historic last year when over 75 Indian Achievers were honoured for the very first time across the entire spectrum of knowledge and impact. We zoom past the glitterati gala in the heart of London to cities across the length and breadth of India, along with the Achievers to meet and inspire another class of brilliant minds and empathetic hearts.*

*Zippering through 2023, we see India host and lead crucial discussions at the G20. Spot India's External Affairs Minister and Defence Minister in London establishing deeper and stronger ties with a nation that once ruled her and now has an Indian-origin Prime Minister at the helm, as both countries work towards a mammoth Free Trade Agreement. Notice the spotlight on Maharashtra's legislators at a study tour in Wales and follow the journey of Scottish parliamentarians in New Delhi – as they all find inspiration across the seas. Look closely at the record-breaking number of Indian students at UK universities, helping international education and the British economy expand and grow, even under the dark clouds of the rhetoric of migration that*

*threatens to rain on their parade. Notice that we don't shy away from contentious issues; we raise them in the corridors of power where the laws are made – right in the British Parliament! Sit tight, as we find our way through the fog of the present into a future sparkling with hope. Yes, our theme this year is The Future of Education and onwards we go! Our experts show you how the India-UK relationship is evolving, how education is transforming and the role YOU – an important stakeholder – play in all this. From AI to TNE, from sports to sustainability, from skills to employability, edtech disruptions and human connections are changing the very nature and definition of education. Hold on. Innovation is your driver. Whether born in tinker labs in remote state schools across India or research labs in elite global universities, imagination drives innovation and innovation drives growth. Education is no longer a narrow pathway, it is expansive, creative, and incredibly innovative. And transforming at the speed of thought. Notice the twinkling sky as we add more stars to the galaxy of Achievers each year with the hope that their brilliance will serve as a beacon to those who need the guiding light to navigate the darkness of ignorance.*

*After all, to quote Wells once again: 'Civilisation is a race between education and catastrophe.'*

*I know which wagon I want to hitch my future to. Do you? ■*

*Ruhi Khan*

# Celebrating UK's strong human connect with India

## Ruhi Khan

India's External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar paid an official visit to the United Kingdom in November 2023. He called on the British Prime Minister Mr Rishi Sunak at 10 Downing Street and took part in Diwali celebrations with the Indian-origin British premier and his wife Akshata Murty, daughter of India's business magnate Narayana Murthy and novelist Sudha Murthy. The Indian EAM and the British PM expressed satisfaction at the positive momentum in enhancing the India-UK relationship as an important factor in addressing contemporary challenges. They also reviewed the implementation of Roadmap 2030 and discussed ongoing negotiations for an India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA). EAM presented PM Sunak with a cricket bat signed by Virat Kohli. For his first bilateral meeting as Foreign Secretary, Lord David Cameron welcomed Dr S Jaishankar and held discussions on realising the full potential of the India-UK strategic partnership in politics, economics and trade, defence and security, science and technology, innovation, health, education, people-to-people connections and mobility. They also exchanged views on shared global challenges including the situation in Israel and Gaza, the Ukraine conflict and the Indo-Pacific. They also covered the importance of the Indo-Pacific region to global growth and prosperity. The EAM also met Secretary of State for Home, James Cleverly and discussed the importance of mobility in skills and talent in developing bilateral cooperation, and exchanged views on addressing extremism, and trans-border crimes including economic offences and trafficking. In EAM's meeting with Defence Secretary Shapps, they focused on enhancing defence and security cooperation, recognizing that 'Make in India' offers a wealth of opportunities to UK



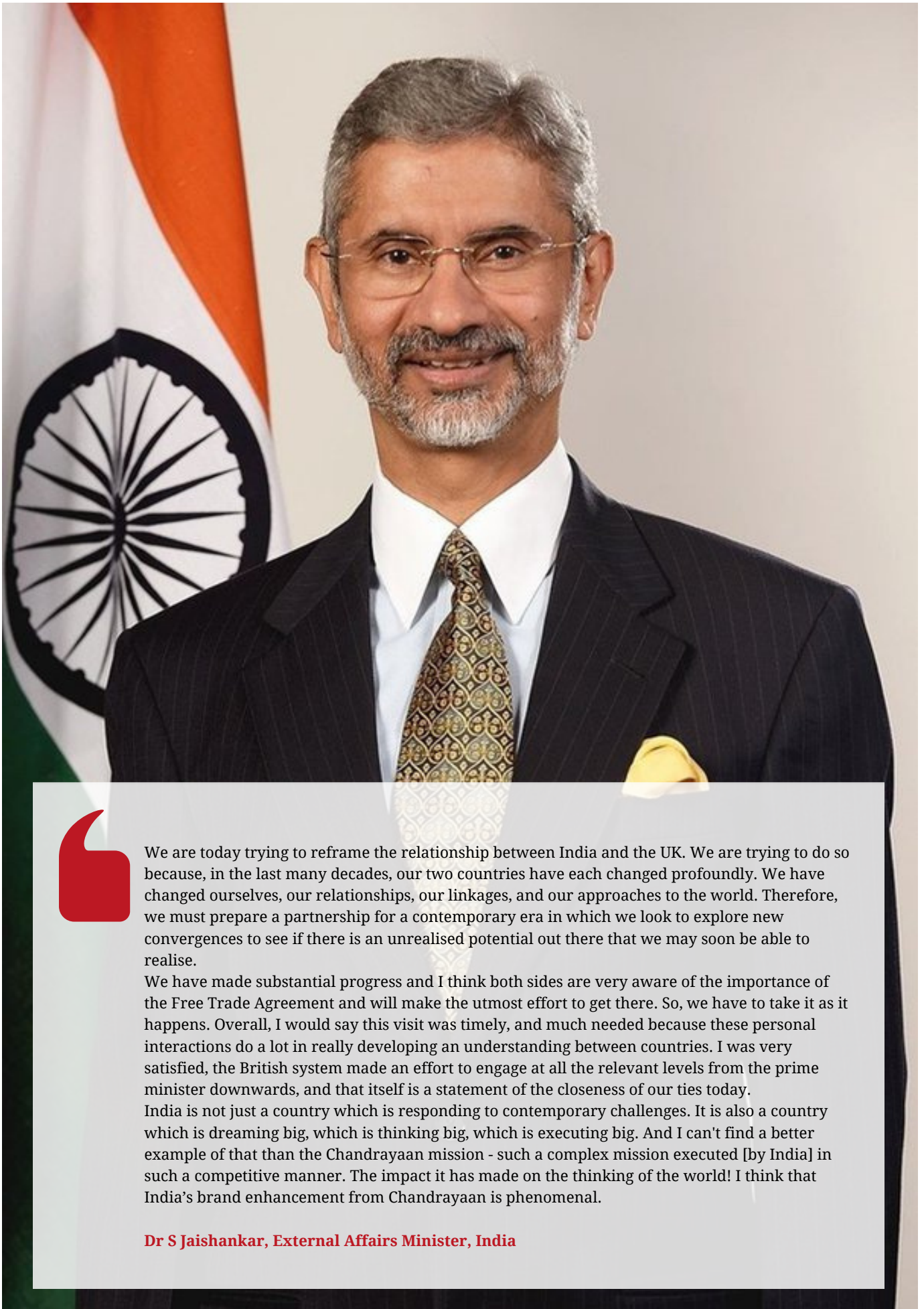
External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, his wife Kyoko Jaishankar with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Akshata Murty in London.



(Above) Foreign Secretary David Cameron meeting the Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar. (Below) Ruhi Khan, Editor of Living Bridge with Dr Jaishankar at India House, London.



companies for potential industrial partnerships. EAM also met the former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, Leader of the Opposition Keir Starmer, Shadow Foreign Secretary Mr. David Lammy, along with Shadow Minister of State for Asia & the Pacific, Catherine West. Dr Jaishankar also attended a diaspora meet, flagged off the repatriation of stolen 8th century idols to India and held a meeting with some senior journalists, including the editor of the Living Bridge, where he emphasised that his visit further consolidated the long-standing historical ties between the two countries and provided a new impetus to bilateral cooperation in diverse areas against the backdrop of progress on the India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and Roadmap 2030. ■



We are today trying to reframe the relationship between India and the UK. We are trying to do so because, in the last many decades, our two countries have each changed profoundly. We have changed ourselves, our relationships, our linkages, and our approaches to the world. Therefore, we must prepare a partnership for a contemporary era in which we look to explore new convergences to see if there is an unrealised potential out there that we may soon be able to realise.

We have made substantial progress and I think both sides are very aware of the importance of the Free Trade Agreement and will make the utmost effort to get there. So, we have to take it as it happens. Overall, I would say this visit was timely, and much needed because these personal interactions do a lot in really developing an understanding between countries. I was very satisfied, the British system made an effort to engage at all the relevant levels from the prime minister downwards, and that itself is a statement of the closeness of our ties today.

India is not just a country which is responding to contemporary challenges. It is also a country which is dreaming big, which is thinking big, which is executing big. And I can't find a better example of that than the Chandrayaan mission - such a complex mission executed [by India] in such a competitive manner. The impact it has made on the thinking of the world! I think that India's brand enhancement from Chandrayaan is phenomenal.

**Dr S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister, India**

# India, UK want strong strategic relations



Mr Singh visited the Ambedkar House in London, home of Dr BR Ambedkar, who lived there between 1921 and 1922 while he was pursuing a degree in Economics at London School of Economics, and a degree in Law at Gray's Inn. The defence minister wrote in the Visitor's Book that it is a great experience to visit the memorial of the creator of the venerable Constitution of India, the guiding light of our Republic.



Mr Rajnath Singh flagged off the signing of two agreements between India and UK - an MoU on conduct of bilateral international cadet exchange programme, and a Letter of Arrangement between Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) on defence collaboration in research and development.





India is ready with a skilled human resource base, a robust pro-FDI & pro-business ecosystem and a huge domestic market. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two countries and the Government of India envisions an enriching partnership with the UK to cooperate, co-create and co-innovate. By synergising the strengths of our nations, we can do great things together. Had an excellent meeting with UK Defence Minister, Mr. Grant Shapps. We reviewed the full range of India-UK defence relations. We had fruitful discussions on a wide range of issues pertaining to defence cooperation, security and on enhancing defence industrial cooperation. Held insightful deliberations with the UK Foreign Secretary, Lord David Cameron on boosting India-UK ties and deepening cooperation between both countries. In the coming years, we will continue to strengthen our relationship with the UK, deepening defence cooperation in an increasingly contested world. By synergising the strengths of our nations, we can do great things together.

**Mr Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister, India**

# Indian alumni and students are the bedrock of the future

During the last 18 months, the British Council teams have engaged with leaders of nearly 50 UK Universities, co-hosted with the Department of Business and Trade the largest higher education delegation visit to India and distributed 93 Going Global Partnerships grants enabling new research or teaching partnerships to 71 Indian and 51 UK Universities. India's Presidency of the G20 has been widely praised, not only for its comprehensive technical focus on the different tracks, including education and culture which the British Council helped coordinate on behalf of the UK, but in the words of the External Affairs Minister, it has also 'shown India to the world and the world to India'.

This interest and engagement between India and the UK, is newer and more energetic than ever before. It is just the best time to be in education in India, and for the education sectors to maximise study and growth opportunities for young people and institutions sectors of both our countries.

India is the world's second-largest sender of international students globally, sending over half million students in 2021, 7.9 per cent of all internationally mobile students globally. Though Transnational Education numbers are comparatively low at 12k in 2022-23, we predict a steady increase, not least because of India's demographic dividend (a fifth of the world's 25 y.o. are in India) rapid urbanization and growth of the middle class now at 31 per cent mean that the demand for higher education is a key policy focus.

With education, research and innovation front and centre in the India-UK Roadmap 2030 and the Mutual Recognition of Academic Qualifications (MRQ) signed and being operationalised with ENIC, we have the policy frameworks in place to drive bilateral engagement.

Fast-paced changes in the regulatory environment, such as new TNE guidelines (2022) and the Setting up of



Alison Barrett MBE is the Country Director of the British Council in India leading all operations across Arts & Culture, Education and English Programmes. She has worked for the British Council for over 25 years. Most of her career has been spent in the Asia-Pacific region, including India (where she was based for 20 years and has recently returned), Pakistan, UAE and Thailand. She holds an MA from the Institute of Education, University College London and in 2014 was awarded an MBE for services to the teaching and learning of English in India.

Foreign Higher Educational Institutions published just a month or so ago, both show a strong political commitment in India to the liberalisation of education. The world's eyes are on India, and she is focused on becoming a global education hub and a strong knowledge economy.

India's ecosystem of education and technology startups – many of them Unicorns, its policy and regulatory changes as demonstrated by the visionary and ambitious National Education Policy, and its focus on internationalisation are signs of a nation invested in providing the best skills, training and opportunities to its people.

Our research shows that young Indian people know more about and have more positive perceptions of the UK than the other way around. However, we want more young people in the UK to have these same benefits, personal connections and relationships with India. To make this happen responsibly, we have a range of programmes from our Agents Quality Framework and Training offers to our Alumni UK platform to our Going Global Partnerships and a host of scholarships for Indian students, to grow collaboration between our countries.

And we know that having exposure to another country (particularly through studying) has a positive impact on trust and perceptions of that country. We have some evidence that the uplift is particularly strong for those who have studied in India. I am a living example of this: I have an extremely close bond with Japan and India, having studied in both in my twenties.

The Indian alumni and students in the UK, the next generation of young people are the bedrock of the future relationship between our countries. And it is by empowering these connections, and by creating greater opportunities for young people, that will make for a more equal partnership in the future, sparking a shared future for our nations.



Parliamentarians and key stakeholders in international education launch the India-UK Achievers Honours 2024 at the Palace of Westminster

# International education strengthens India-UK ties: UK Parliamentarians

The round-table discussion in the British Parliament looked at the prospects and challenges of International Education in the UK

## Aishwarya Giri

On 12 December 2023, key stakeholders in the international higher education sector congregated at the UK Parliament for the official launch of the second edition of the India UK Achievers Honours to celebrate the societal contributions and professional success of overseas Indians who studied in the UK. This was followed by an intense discussion ranging from student mobility to developments in immigration policies. The panel included **Gareth Thomas**

**MP**, Shadow Minister, International Trade, UK; **Rt Hon Lord Jo Johnson**, former UK Universities Minister, **Lord Karan Bilimoria**, Co-Chair of the International Students APPG and Chancellor of the University of Birmingham; **Virendra Sharma MP** for Ealing Southall, Chair of the Indo-British APPG; **Navendu Mishra MP** for Stockport; **Simon Emmett**, Chief Executive Officer, IDP; **David Pilsbury**, Chief Development Officer, Oxford; Sandy Bhangal of the ETS; and **Sanam Arora**, Chairperson, NISAU. The session was moderated by **Ruhi Khan**, Editor, Living Bridge. >>

**Ruhi Khan:** Gareth Thomas, the government calls higher education as a “valuable export” and India as a “priority market for international education”. With FTA in the making, how do you see this materialise?

**Gareth Thomas:** The FTA will be a very significant moment in terms of trade relationships post-Brexit. I think for the UK, it is significant in the sense that it is the first big G20 economy that Britain will have done a free trade agreement with since it left the European Union. And with India’s economy now bigger than ours, it is worthwhile running the race. If we want our own economic growth, we must do more trade with India. One of the great routes for doing that is through higher education. Until relatively recently, higher education as an area of growth wasn’t particularly controversial in the UK, but it has become more controversial of late. But if we see an ever-rising tide in terms of Indian students coming to the UK directly or growth in the higher education relationship, I think hopefully that will feed off into all sorts of different directions and will have a real impact. So, I see higher education both as an end in terms of increasing growth and also as a key to enhancing relationships more generally.

**Ruhi Khan:** Focus on growth through the FTA, says Mr Thomas. So, Mr Navendu Mishra, what are your expectations with the FTA?

**Navendu Mishra:** For my constituency, I want to see more investments. We already have a large number of Indian businesses in Stockport and the North-West including research centres with Manchester University. And, we have a pipeline as Gareth suggested of highly educated Indians who come here to do their master’s and PhD, and we should utilise that. The UK has a really good product when it comes to education. However, we do need to make sure that students have a pathway whether it is going back to India and setting up their own businesses or joining the workforce in India, or wanting to work in this country, and that is a little controversial. We need to make sure that there is a fair system of pathways after they finish their education in the UK. There is a really good opportunity with regard to shared prosperity and a shared future when it comes to UK-

**If we want our own economic growth, we must do more trade with India. One of the great routes for doing that is through higher education.**

India. As democratic governments, we should be natural allies.

**Ruhi Khan:** Absolutely agree, that student numbers are becoming more political and controversial; who would be better to tell us about that than Mr Virendra Sharma, the longest-serving Indian-origin MP in the UK. Mr Sharma, how do you think the students form the living bridge between India and the UK?

**Virendra Sharma:** As everybody says sometimes politics becomes very controversial, but I don’t believe that. I believe consensus can be created. The advantage that Britain has from students is that they bring extra skills, and in Britain, we have a skills gap. Who is the best to fill those gaps at this stage? If you want to prepare somebody to get those skills, the minimum requirement is seven years. So, it [international education] is an advantageous thing that British policymakers and government must consider. And how do students become the bridge between Britain and India?



Navendu Mishra, MP



Gareth Thomas, MP

They become the bridge because both countries are democratic, and both have educational interests; Indian parents and grandparents have a passion for education. I believe that the students of today, the youngsters of today are the future of both nations, and they will bring prosperity for all, not few.

**Ruhi Khan:** Let’s talk about the elephant in the room, the new policy on migration, introduced just at the beginning of December, which has raised the wage bar for students to get visas from £26,200 to £38,700, that’s quite a leap. Also, according to that, several international students would not be able to get their families here which would add to the mental health of the students. Let me come to you Sanam because you have got your ears to the ground, you have got your boots in every university through your networks. What are you hearing? The post-study visa was obviously a huge leap, with this new immigration policy, are we taking a step back?

**There is a really good opportunity with regard to shared prosperity and a shared future. As democratic governments, we should be natural allies.**



**Sanam Arora:** Definitely feels like a very large step back if it happens. I think we are very worried that the graduate route will be taken away. That's a concern because when the dependents policy was announced earlier in the year, that also showed a 60% or so fall in number coming from India and I think one Indian student contributes at least £50000-70000 net per year into the British economy, so I think that's the impact on the economy with measures like these are quite concerning. And then, there's the impact on the mental well-being of the students. So, it feels really bizarre that we are doing this to young talented people who can actually fill the skills gap in our country. I think at any point in time about 40-45% of the STEM vacancies in the UK are going unfulfilled. We are not joining those dots of international graduates trained by us to fill our productivity issues. And essentially, if we are the only G7 economy that's not growing. I think we need to be ambitious about our policies, but I feel we are getting regressive. Students have choices as consumers and I think we need to understand that. At a time when countries like Australia and Canada are increasing their in-study and post-study working rights, we seem to be reversing and I think that we are really damaging the brand Britain by continuously creating that uncertainty. Students tell us that they are feeling like cash cows. I think we have a long way to go to make sure that the world-class education we are imparting here; that brand and the perception and optics of that brand remain quite high as well.

**Ruhi Khan:** Yes absolutely; and you along with Lord Bilimoria and Lord Johnson have been actively campaigning for the post-study work visa. So, Lord Bilimoria, let me come to you, as an astute entrepreneur, when you see international students making this massive contribution to the UK economy and then they get talked about in this rhetoric against immigration, how do you think it plays out? Well, where are we going wrong with this?

**Lord Karan Bilimoria:** I very proudly take credit for initiating the two-year post-graduation work visa in the first place. But then, it was taken away by



Lord Karan Bilimoria

**Without international students, postgraduate courses in our universities will collapse because there aren't enough British students.**

Theresa May in 2012, and then APPG and NISAU have been campaigning to bring it back. And we have seen the effects on the Indian student has been instant and hugely impactful. Now, we have a hostile immigration approach which is damaging to the UK. And this is based on many myths and lies. Number one – why do we keep international students in the net migration numbers? Other countries like Australia and America exclude international students from net migration figures and treat them as temporary migrants. Officially, anyone who stays in this country for one year is counted as an immigrant, and the most popular course for international students is the one-year master's degree. But they are temporary migrants and should be excluded from the net figures. And because international students' figures have been rising since the two-year post-graduation work visa was brought in, you have more international students coming in than leaving. 25% of world leaders are educated in British universities. Another 25% in American universities. That's how impactful the international students' soft power is! >>



**COLLECTIVE POWER**

**Come together at York**

Find out more  
[york.ac.uk/international](http://york.ac.uk/international)



**GLOBAL TOP 150**

Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2024

 [uniofyork\\_southasia](https://www.instagram.com/uniofyork_southasia)

We can see now, admire people around the world who have been educated in British universities, it is something you can't buy; and here we are making enemies out of international students and creating fear about them.

Myth number 2 is that international students take up the place of the UK students. What nonsense! International students, in undergraduate degree courses are less than 15%. Without international students, postgraduate courses in our universities will collapse because there aren't enough British students who want to do them. So, we need them to keep the postgraduate courses going and our research excellence is fed through the postgraduate courses because many people who do master's will leap onto PhDs.

There's another myth that needs to be addressed – dependents. London Business School, which I am an alumnus of, has 1600 students every year, 25%, that is 400, bring in dependents and only 10% of those dependents stay on and remain for work purposes after post-graduation. And the origin of the dependents at LBS, wait for this, EU 22%, America 11%, China 11%, and less than 10% from countries like India. So, I think we have got it absolutely wrong with this government's hostile approach to immigration. I am sorry I have been blunt but I mean every word I said.

**Ruhi Khan:** And that is what we like about you. I also think that the word 'dependent' is so misleading because international students have to show that they can support themselves and whoever they bring here with enough money in the bank. And dependents are not dependent on any government handouts, in fact, they work and contribute through paying taxes. Let me come to you Lord Johnson, as a former Universities Minister, and even afterwards, you have been a very strong proponent of expanding the portfolio of UK higher education in the international market. What is your main concern?

**Lord Johnson:** I want to endorse what Karan said, I strongly agree with it. I will pick up one thing that particularly concerns me about recent developments which is the threshold - taking it from 26,200 to 38,700 of the skilled worker route. I would like to

I am worried that the fact that we are having a very substantial policy change in the skilled worker visa, could effectively kill the graduate route.

understand what others think – if there is going to be a blowback or washback effect on the attractiveness of the graduate route as a result. If students see that they have got these two years of graduate route and that can lead to switching to skilled worker route at some point during that period, but the threshold is going to be that high, is it going to be attainable for students contemplating starting their studies in the UK, particularly for students pursuing creative courses, students studying in the regions where salary is going to be lower than London? Even if we have a graduate route review that focuses on abuses, I am worried that the fact that we are having a very substantial policy change in the skilled worker visa, could effectively kill the graduate route for quite a considerable number of institutions anywhere. I would be interested in anyone's opinion on that.

**Ruhi Khan:** I will come to you, Simon, on that question Lord Johnson raised. Do you think that this is a worldwide



Virendra Sharma, MP



Lord Jo Johnson

trend? With regard to the graduate policy review and new migration policy, do you see any change in student mobility? Are you expecting the trend to change drastically for the next couple of years?

**Simon Emmett:** Yes, we are looking at it very closely. Before that, let me first acknowledge the work of Sanam and NISAU and how important this is. The reason it is important is that India is a massive market, and the most pressing market I have ever known for policy conditions. It is also for the US and Canada. The primary reason why students choose the UK is to receive quality education, and so the sector needs to work to protect that. The second area is contrasting why students are choosing Australia and Canada, it is because of the graduate work opportunities, it is seen as safe and welcoming. I feel that's why your Achievers Honours is very important because the sector is on the front foot marked by policy uncertainty. We need to tell influential stories of the

The students of today, the youngsters of today are the future of both nations, and they will bring prosperity for all, not few.

incredible contributions of the Indian students.

I think on the specific question about data we know that 62% of our applicants and offer holders say that post-study work is the main influencing factor for studying and 47% say that they would shift destination if that is not available. So, while we have got some uncertainty in policy where we need to work together and share some insights to look forward; I would reinforce that, in the meantime, promoting the excellence of the UK higher education and highlighting the great stories through Achievers is going to be absolutely important.

**Lord Johnson:** David, you have got your boot on the ground? What do you

think about the skilled worker threshold rising?

**David Pilsbury:** We are seeing the tightening of policies in Australia and Canada. Australia is bringing some very unwelcome ideas, you need to be careful what you wish for if you go for a fundamental review of higher education. And I guess I would say that in a sector that is very concerned with identities, it is strange that we do not recognise how important migration is. We need to engage those who are not enthusiastic about going global. We need to talk to those people who do not believe in this narrative. I am sorry but there are a lot of them.

**Sanam Arora:** We have a collection of stories from last year in our magazine

Living Bridge, and I am sure that when you see the thousands of applications coming up this year, you will come across those incredible stories again.

*Aishwarya Giri is the Project Officer at the India-UK Achievers Honours. She has a Master's in International Relations from the London School of Economics (2023) and a Bachelor's in Political Science from Miranda House, University of Delhi. She is also contributing to the Centre of Commonwealth Affairs in a research capacity, and has interned at the Nehru Centre, the Cultural Wing of the High Commission of India. ■*



The UK's higher education system is one of our most valuable exports, and India is not only a crucial partner for us in education but one of the five priority markets of the International Education Strategy. Today's event highlights the importance of mutually beneficial education partnerships between the UK and India, building bridges between people and supporting the next generation to succeed.

Malcolm Ian Offord, Baron Offord of Garvel,  
Minister for Exports, UK



# Blast from Indian laurels in



Cornelia Sorabji



Harivanshrai Bachchan



Srinivasa Ramanujan



Jawaharlal Nehru



Iftikhar Ali Khan Pataudi

Over a century ago, Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, wrote a letter to Downing College, University of Cambridge. The letter, dated 19th March 1909, was addressed to Frederick Marsh, the College Master, and sought to know whether Downing College would acquiesce in the plan to limit the number of Indian students at the University of Cambridge. Marsh replied saying that the College's Governing Body had agreed to not do that.

This letter uncovered by Downing postgraduate student Teresa Segura-Garcia shows that the college rebuffed a senior Whitehall official because it was aware that Indian students wanting to join the Bar in Calcutta and Bombay were required to be trained in England. As Downing College had a special strength in law, it was particularly popular for students from Bengal and Western India. In many ways, the stand taken by Downing College exemplifies what universities and colleges in the UK desire today – the ability to offer the best terms to attract international students in an increasingly competitive domain. Indian students have been coming to the UK for over 150 years. In the current context of controversies surrounding international students, it is important to remember that the tradition of Indian students coming to the UK is far longer and chequered than many would like to believe.

It began, as stated earlier, due to the requirement of being a Barrister trained in England to be able to practise in the newly established High Courts in India. An examination to join the prestigious Indian Civil Service (ICS) was held in England, where successful candidates needed to have a period of study before proceeding to take



Danish Khan is a historian at the University of Oxford. As a Martin Senior scholar at Worcester College and an Amersi scholar at Brasenose College, Danish researches the global history of capitalism. Danish is also an author and journalist writing extensively on history, law, politics, finance and culture for print and television media across India including a weekly column in Money Control. He is the President of the Indian Journalist Association UK and is on the Black Members' Council at the National Union of Journalists.

their postings in India.

The first woman to study law at any British University was Cornelia Sorabji (1866-1954) who belonged to the Parsi community. After finishing her studies at the University of Oxford, she went back to India in the 1890s where she practised in various courts often taking up cases involving women who were victims of legal fraud. Sorabji's bust now adorns the Lincoln's Inn and she rightfully shares space as among the most outstanding and famous students at Somerville College, along with former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. It was also to study law that several of the prominent leaders from the Indian subcontinent came to England. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Mohammed Ali, Mohan Kumaramangalam and scores of others.

# the Past

## Oxbridge Crown

Indian students made their mark in diverse subjects. Sir Raghunath Paranjpe (1876-1966) became the first Indian (and perhaps the first non-British) to achieve the coveted title of Senior Wrangler at the University of Cambridge. He got the distinction after becoming the highest-scoring student in the third year of the Mathematical Tripos with first-class honours at Cambridge. Paranjpe later served as principal of Fergusson College and was the vice-chancellor at Lucknow University and the University of Poona. Renowned astrophysicist Jayant Narlikar came to Cambridge after finishing his science degree at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) where he famously collaborated with his PhD guide Sir Fred Hoyle to develop the Hoyle-Narlikar theory. Among his contemporaries was Stephen Hawking with whom he played table tennis. The mathematics prodigy Srinivasa Ramanujan (portrayed by Dev Patel in *The Man Who Knew Infinity*) and Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, a true polymath with pathbreaking work in physics and botany, were both at Cambridge. Shyamji Krishna Varma was a graduate of Balliol College at the University of Oxford, where he was also an assistant to the Sanskrit scholar Sir Monier Monier-Williams.

The father-son duo of Iftikhar Ali Khan Pataudi and Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi (father of actor Saif Ali Khan) studied at Balliol College and are known for their exploits on the cricket field. Amitabh Bachchan's father Harivanshrai Bachchan, the famous Hindi poet, did a PhD in English writing on Y. B. Yeats in the early 1950s at St Catharine's College, Cambridge. Manmohan Singh and Amartya Sen had an association with both Oxford and Cambridge. Some notables like Jaipal Singh Munda (1903-1970) had a multifaceted career. Munda studied Economics at St John's College, Oxford and captained the Indian hockey team which won the

**The stand taken by Downing College in 1909 exemplifies what universities and colleges in the UK desire today.**

Olympics gold in 1928. He was a member of the Constituent Assembly and championed the rights of India's tribal community. It was as fellow students at Oxford where Kabir Bedi's parents, father Baba Pyare Lal Bedi from Lahore and mother Freda Houlston, from Derby met and married in the 1930s.

The early batches of students from the subcontinent at Oxbridge were from rich families, although there were exceptions. Much has changed over the years and Indian students from various backgrounds, regions and interests now attend Oxbridge colleges.

More than 400 years ago when Sir Thomas Roe returned to England in 1619 after serving as British ambassador in the court of Mughal Emperor Jehangir he shared his impressions and experience of India. Standing in Westminster, he wondered whether England could allow people of different faiths to trade and settle in London because that seemed to be one of the key reasons for the economic advancement of India. Stakeholders in the UK higher education seem to be asking a similar question in a different framework - in an era of intense global competition shouldn't the UK make its universities as attractive as possible for international students, the key to UK's economic growth? ■



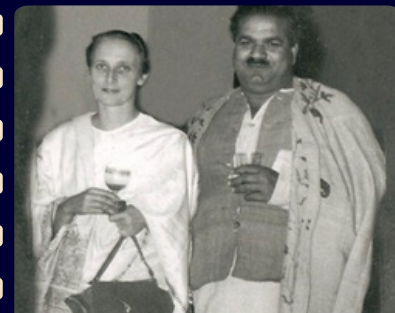
Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose



Mohammed Ali



Indira Gandhi



Freda Bedi and Baba Pyare Lal Bedi



Jaipal Singh Munda

# Something amazing happens every day in India: British diplomat

**Dr Andrew Fleming** is the British Deputy High Commissioner to Kolkata. He has also served as British Deputy High Commissioner to Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for 5 years and then as Officer on Special Temporary Duty in Bengaluru.

In an interview with Living Bridge's editor **Ruhi Khan**, Dr. Fleming speaks on his love for India, his efforts to strengthen India-UK ties and why he admires NISAU.

**RK: Please tell us a little bit about your association with India?**

**AF:** I first visited India in 1988 and travelled to Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh & Delhi. I was still a teenager and my trip was backpacking style in the peak of summer. I remember reading a book that those who visit India once are destined to return again and again and that lure was a constant for me. It was in 2000 I returned, this time to explore the South doing a circular trip by train, bus and (in the Kerala backwaters boat). One of my most significant memories of that visit was Madurai, another Cochin as it was then called. I was successful in securing a role as Deputy High Commissioner in Hyderabad and spent five wonderful



Dr Andrew Fleming, the British Deputy High Commissioner to Kolkata.

years representing the UK in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh between 2017 and 2022. I visited all but five districts in those two states and if it wasn't for the pandemic, I would have managed to get to them all. It is very different living in a country to visiting it and I really enjoyed the experience. I was asked to

stay on and do temporary duty in Bengaluru.

I spent about 11 months in the UK before I took up this role in November 2023 as Deputy High Commissioner, Kolkata, covering East and North East states (13 states and one Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands). I already feel it is going to be an amazing experience given the diversity of this region and the fact that it is relatively little known to the UK audience.

**RK: What are some of the factors, you believe, that help strengthen the India-UK relationship?**

**AF:** British and Indian history is intertwined on so many levels. We share many common passions, education, food and sports being but three. It is the former – education – that has seen many young Indians spend extended times in the UK. Some have pursued successful careers in the UK. I cannot neglect to mention the huge number of India doctors who have worked or are working in the NHS, and there are many other sectors where Indians have also excelled, from academia to tech. The UK and India are both democracies. There is huge amount of



overlap in our thinking and ambition, and this is exemplified by the 2030 Roadmap for India-UK relations signed by our respective Prime Ministers in May 2021. It covers health, climate, trade, education, science and technology and defence.

**RK: What do you see as the potential in the East and North-East of India to develop stronger bilateral relations with the UK in higher education and trade, esp. in the light of the Free Trade Agreement?**

**AF:** I have been in this region only since early November last year but have visited seven states and met four Chief Ministers and so many other officials, business leaders and institutions in the region in this short time. The volume of interactions has been huge and extremely insightful. In many states, especially West Bengal and some of the North Eastern states, the knowledge of and positive disposition towards the UK is well developed. The desire to find opportunities to collaborate and partner is strong in a multitude of areas spanning both the education and business sector.

The combined population of this region is over 340 million (as per 2011 Census). That is a huge number, more than the third largest country (United States) and if we can make the right connections the opportunities to deepen relations across this region are huge. But that does require understanding the region and the fact that each state is different in its asks and their aspirations.

Wherever I travel, the thirst for education is insatiable and the desire to collaborate and partner with international universities is in high demand at every institution I have visited. But the footfall of British universities in the East and North East is far lighter than most parts of the country; having helped make some

really good connections of different types during my tenure in Hyderabad I really hope to change that here. Yes, it is not just about universities, skilling is equally important, and the UK has a multitude of organisations that offer opportunities in that space too.

**RK: If you were to list three things you like about India, what would it be and why?**

**AF:** The people are top of my list in all of the 117 countries I have visited, and it is no different here. For me people are everything, I especially love engaging with young people and hearing about their view of the world and their dreams.

The scale because everything in India is at a scale that is almost incomprehensible. The state of Bihar for example, which relatively few people visit, has a population equivalent to Mexico. Even West Bengal has a number equivalent to my wife's nation, Vietnam. With scale comes opportunity and that excites me. The diverse culture and heritage, I honestly believe no nation can begin to compete. I feel so fortunate to be able to get out and about to explore.

**RK: Could you share any memorable moments/ experiences in India?**

**AF:** Hosting The Countess of Wessex (now The Duchess of Edinburgh) in Hyderabad was a fabulous experience my family and I will never forget. From our family perspective, travelling to Hampi in Karnataka and then Odisha just before the pandemic in 2020 was an incredible journey of discovery. Then there is the sporting dimension, getting to know people like Mithali Raj, PV Sindhu, and Para-Badminton Champion Manasi Joshi has been incredible. I also got to see Hyderabad F.C. clinch the ISL Championship in Goa in 2022 and England win against Pakistan at Eden Gardens during the

recent Cricket World Cup.

But in truth, something amazing happens every day in India and I am now recording my thoughts daily on LinkedIn. Perhaps one day I will write a book; the working title is 'A Decade in India'.

**RK: You have been a friend of NISAU for many years now. How would you describe NISAU and the work it does?**

**AF:** It is true I was aware of NISAU since I started working in Hyderabad, but the organisation really came to my attention during the pandemic. So much support was mobilised at that time for stranded students and like many others, I was moved by what I witnessed and the network. I admire any organisation that genuinely wants to help and support its members and encourage and motivate them.

**RK: What are your views on the Achiever Honours?**

**AF:** This is a terrific idea. What better way to motivate than recognising some of the exceptional people who have gone on to do amazing things. I was fortunate enough to be at the inaugural edition last year, this year is bigger and better with a conference added. I am also sure there are more entries after the success of last year making it even tougher for us judges.

**RK: Any message for Indian students who would like to study in the UK?**

**AF:** I will simply say that the UK has a superb offer with world class universities and some of the most renowned faculty. Almost all who have had that opportunity tell me the UK was the best experience. That makes me very proud. ■



# Indian students in the UK are more significant than ever

As we gather to celebrate the NISAU Achievers Awards this year, I am thrilled to reflect on the extraordinary progress and achievements of Indian students in the UK. The landscape of international education has witnessed remarkable changes, with Indian students playing a pivotal role in this dynamic environment. In my roles as the Co-Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for International Students and President of the UK Council for International Student Affairs as well as being Chancellor of the University of Birmingham, I have witnessed firsthand these rapid advancements. My family from India have been educated in the UK for three generations, starting almost a century ago. These generations long ties created by Indian students studying in the UK is a living bridge and is priceless. The UK continues to be a premier destination for higher education with 4 British universities in the top 10 and 17 in the top 100, as evidenced by the significant increase in the number of Indian students choosing UK universities. In a striking development, the UK Home Office reported a 54% increase in the number of sponsored study visas granted to Indian students compared to the previous year. This surge is indicative of the UK's growing appeal as a preferred destination for higher education among Indian students. The Graduate Route, which I personally championed the introduction of in 2007 in the House of Lords, allows students to stay on and work in the UK after completing their studies, has been a significant factor in this trend. Around 42% of extensions under this route were granted to Indian students, showcasing their desire to gain valuable work experience in the UK post-graduation. These developments are not just numbers; they represent the aspirations and dreams of thousands of Indian students who see the UK as a land of opportunities. The UK's educational system continues to attract a vast number of Indian



Lord Karan Bilimoria is the Chancellor of the University of Birmingham and is the President of the UK Council for International Students Affairs (UKCISA). He is the founding chairman of the UK India Business Council and a founding member of the Prime Minister of India's Global Advisory Council. In 2008 he was awarded the Pravasi Bharti Samman by the President of India.

---

The progress and achievements of Indian students in the UK over the past year have been nothing short of remarkable.

---

students, making them the largest nationality receiving study visas in 2023. With over a quarter of study visas issued to Indian students, their presence in the UK has become more significant than ever. The increasing number of Indian students therefore reflects the strong bilateral ties between the UK and India. Their contributions extend beyond academia, enriching the cultural and social fabric of the UK. As these young minds from India thrive in the UK's educational system, they not only achieve their personal aspirations but also strengthen the bond between our two great nations. The progress and achievements of Indian students in the UK over the past year have been nothing short of remarkable. Their growing presence in the UK's universities is a testament to the enduring appeal of British education and the opportunities it offers. As we look to the future, I am confident that the relationship between the UK and India, forged through education, will continue to flourish, benefiting both our countries in innumerable ways. As we navigate these exciting times, the role of NISAU becomes increasingly crucial. As a proud patron of NISAU, I particularly applaud their relentless support and advocacy for Indian students in the UK. Together, we will continue to champion the cause of international education and ensure that our students receive the best possible opportunities to thrive and contribute to our shared global future. ■



# The Symphony of Success

## Vignesh Karthik KR

In the hallowed halls of the London School of Economics in 2012, a dream took root among a group of enthusiastic international students. It was a dream born out of a need – a need to support our fellow Indian students navigating the complexities of international education in the UK. From these humble beginnings, the National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) blossomed, driven by a shared vision and an unyielding dedication to our community. Over the decade, NISAU has grown into a bastion of hope and support, becoming the world's largest platform of its kind. Our efforts have not just been about creating a network; they have been about building a family – a home away from home for Indian students.

## THE INDIA UK ACHIEVERS HONOURS – A CELEBRATION OF STORIES

The 'India UK Achievers Honours' campaign was not just an event; it was a narrative of dreams, struggles, and triumphs. It was our ode to the 75th anniversary of India's independence and a decade of NISAU's existence. Each of the 75 awardees represented a unique story of determination, brilliance, and success.

Imagine a young student from a small Indian town, eyes filled with dreams, arriving in the bustling streets of London. Their journey, fraught with challenges, becomes a beacon of hope for others following in their footsteps. This is the story of many of our awardees – stories that needed to be told, celebrated, and used as a lighthouse for future generations. The gala event was like a symphony, where each note represented the collective efforts of our volunteers, the guidance of mentors, and the unwavering support of our partners. The British Council in India, our principal partner, was instrumental in orchestrating this melody of success. Their expertise and outreach were vital in amplifying our message and making this dream a reality. >>



More than 75 achievers received an honour at the gala ceremony in central London on the eve of Republic Day in 2023.



8 Northumberland had over 500 guests including members of parliament and several stakeholders in the higher education sector.

## THE GALA EVENT

The Achievers Honours 2023 Gala Event at London's illustrious 8 Northumberland Avenue was a grand celebration of distinguished accomplishments across various sectors. This 500-attendee gala brought together around 100 UK universities, including prominent Russell Group members, and notable figures from the UK and Indian Governments. The event was embellished with high-level engagements, including messages from the UK Prime Minister, the Mayor of London and the UK's former Home Secretary.

Highlighting the event were awards to eminent personalities like Dr Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of India, who received the Lifetime Achievement Honour, and key Indian-origin UK parliamentarians, Lord Bilimoria and Virendra Sharma, receiving Living Legend awards. The gala recognised achievements in diverse fields, honouring Parineeti Chopra in Arts, Adar Poonawalla in Business, Raghav Chadha in Politics, and Menaka Guruswamy in Law, among others.

The night was a vibrant mix of laughter, fine dining, performances, and inspiring speeches, creating an atmosphere of encouragement. This event not only recognised individual excellence but also underscored the significance of international collaboration and cultural exchange.

## IMPACT – BEYOND NUMBERS

The impact of the 'India UK Achievers Honours' was poetic. It transcended mere numbers and statistics, touching hearts and igniting minds. We celebrated not just the achievements but the journeys behind them – journeys that were as diverse as India itself. From the corridors of power in the UK Parliament to the artistic pages of our 'Living Bridge' magazine, each story resonated with a message of hope and aspiration. As we bask in the afterglow of this success, our journey at NISAU continues.

We are not just an organization; we are a movement – a movement dedicated to empowering the voices of Indian students, advocating for their rights, and nurturing the India-UK relationship.

Our commitment is unwavering, our



Anushree Srivastava, Astrobiologist from the University of Oxford received her Honours from Barbara Wickham, former Director, India at the British Council.

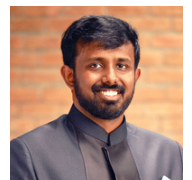
---

**We celebrated not just the achievements but the journeys behind them – journeys that were as diverse as India itself**

---

vision clear, and our resolve stronger than ever. In the tapestry of NISAU's journey, each thread represents a student, an alumni, a story. As we weave this tapestry further, our goal remains – to inspire, support, and celebrate the Indian student community in the UK, ensuring that their stories of courage, resilience, and achievement continue to be told, echoing through the annals of time.

*Dr. Vignesh Karthik KR is the Head of Thought Leadership, NISAU and a postdoctoral research fellow at the Royal Netherlands*



*Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leiden. He has a PhD in Political Science and Public Policy from King's College London, specialising in the study of politics of mobilisation and party politics in the Indian Ocean region. He has advised India's national opposition party and crafted election strategies for three regional parties. As a research affiliate at King's India Institute, he co-leads a group studying social media and disinformation in the Global South. He is also a postdoctoral affiliate at UNC-Chapel Hill's CITAP. ■*



**Manmohan Singh**  
Member of Parliament  
Rajya Sabha



## Message for the National Indian Students and Alumni Union UK

I am honoured that the National Indian Students and Alumni Union UK, in partnership with the British Council in India, has decided to bestow on me the Lifetime Achievement Honour on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of India's independence. I am very touched by this gesture, which is especially meaningful coming from young people who are the future of our country and also of the ties between our two countries.

My own educational relationship with the United Kingdom goes back to my days in St. John's College, Cambridge, where I studied for the Economics Tripos and had the privilege of being taught by great economists such as Professor Joan Robinson and Lord Nicholas Kaldor. I went on to obtain my DPhil from Nuffield College in Oxford, writing my thesis on "India's Export Trends and Prospects for Self-Sustained Growth" under the able supervision of Professor Ian Little. The Universities of Cambridge and Oxford both played a very important role in my intellectual journey.

The India--UK relationship is indeed especially defined by our educational partnership. The founding fathers of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr B. R. Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and many others studied in the UK and went on to become great leaders, leaving a legacy which continues to inspire India and the world. Over the years, countless other Indian students have had the opportunity to study in the UK.

I am delighted to hear that a number of exceptional alumni who have studied in the UK have been honoured as Achievers tonight. I congratulate them all. I urge all of you to work hard to excel in your fields and to strive towards building not only a good career but a better world.

Congratulations to NISAU for your wonderful work in supporting Indians. You make India proud.

Thank you once again for honouring me with this award.

22.1.2023

*Manmohan Singh*  
(Manmohan Singh)

# 2023 Achievers Speak



**Parineeti Chopra** Actress & Singer  
University of Manchester

“This award just means so much more to me because of my history with this country; that little girl 15 years ago, she feels very seen and very grateful today”

**Lord Karan Bilimoria** CBE DL  
University of Cambridge

“There are just so many incredible achievers who have done such outstanding work, many of them I have just heard and read about over the past few years; and today I had the opportunity of meeting with them, and interacting with some wonderful parliamentarians – it is a fantastic and memorable evening”



**Raghav Chadha** Member of Parliament  
London School of Economics and Political Science

“Even when I was studying in the UK, I think the multicultural nature of the experience is what really stood out for me. So, similarly here, we have a very diverse group of Achievers, and it is also nice to connect with other UK educational institutions and the British Council”



**Urvashi Prasad** Director, NITI Aayog  
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

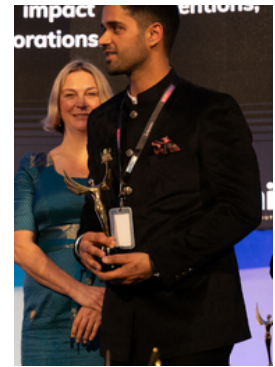
“A big thank you to NISAU, the British Council, and the UK Department of Trade for bestowing this great honour upon me. I feel deeply humbled, especially to find myself in the company of some distinguished individuals doing exceptional work to improve the state of the planet I congratulate them and wish them well for their journeys ahead”



# 2023 Achievers Speak

**Bhavya Bishnoi** Politician  
University of Oxford

“It is humbling to have received this award, considering the amazing work undertaken by other achievers who have utilised their education in the UK to bring out the best in their fields. My education in the UK really helped me bring best practices into our country, into the film school that we built, make it truly international, and give the global standards that Indian students really deserve.



**Meghna Puri** President, Whistling Woods International  
King's College London

“More than anything else, I loved the kind of conversations we had around bringing positive change in India and the UK; the common love for both the countries is amazing”

**Pratishtha Deveshwar** Disability Activist  
University of Oxford

“I am so grateful for the incredible event organised by NISAU and definitely this award, it is a huge motivation for me to keep going and keep doing what I am doing, it has given me another level of motivation to take this to the next level, reach out to more and more girls, focus and give back to what I am truly passionate about and help contribute to the development of women’s football in India”



**Aditi Chauhan** Goalkeeper, Indian Women’s National Football Team  
Loughborough University

“Even when I was studying in the UK, I think the multicultural nature of the experience is what really stood out for me. So, similarly here, we have a very diverse group of Achievers, and it is also nice to connect with other UK educational institutions and the British Council”



Achievers, parliamentarians, bureaucrats, education experts and student leaders bond over a delightful lunch at the UK Parliament.

# I thought I would be living in London: Parineeti Chopra

Over an exclusive lunch with Parliamentarians and students at the Palace of Westminster, Bollywood actor **Parineeti Chopra**, an awardee of the 2023 Achievers Honours, shares her life experiences as an international student in Manchester

**PARINEETI CHOPRA:** Thank you so much for recognizing me and my work. Usually, I'm excited after an award, but this time I'm quite overwhelmed and emotional because this one means so much more to me, just because of my history with this country, being educated here, having lived some of my most important years here. So, to come back here and get awarded is quite special.

**SANAM ARORA:** Talk to me about your UK journey. When were you here? Where did you study? What did you study? And what was that experience like?

**PC:** I was here from 2006 to 2009, at Manchester Business School. I did a triple honours degree in International Business, Finance, and Economics. I thought I would be living in London, working at Canary Wharf, but 2009 was the year of the recession, and we didn't get jobs the way we thought we would. I was forced to go back to India, but my life changed when I went and became an actor. My fondest memories and probably one of my favourite chapters of my life are always going to be the few years that I lived here, studied here, did my first job here, and got my first paycheck here. It's just so many special milestones in my life, so it's

always amazing to be here.

**SA:** So, there were lots of firsts. Talk to me about the feeling behind those firsts. Those experiences that you had in the UK and how do you see those different or similar to India?

**PC:** Very different from India! Especially because at the age of 17 when you leave home and come to live alone, you come from a very different life. You almost become an adult from being a child at your parent's home. You could be doing laundry for the first time or you could be opening a bank account for the first time, having your own mobile phone for the first time. It could be silly little life things like that and then more important things like creating lifelong relationships with friends, learning how to live, learning how to understand life, and entering into your career, it's just so much you go through in that 17 to 25 zone in your life. I think it really shapes you into the person you become in your thirties and forties. So, I think that the person that I am today is because I lived alone on my own with people that I did not know and went through the highs and lows. I think it really shapes you as a person. So, for me, I always credit my education here for the person that I am. ■



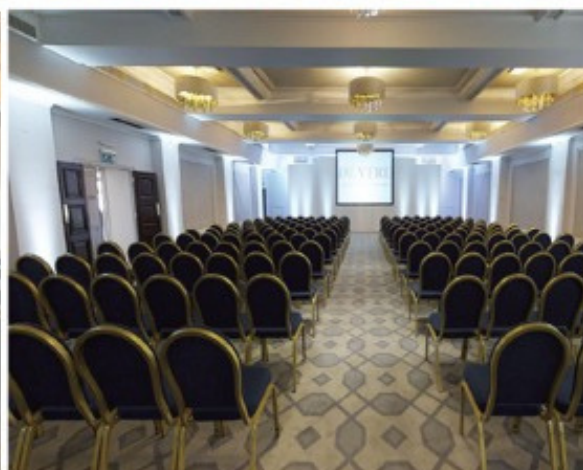
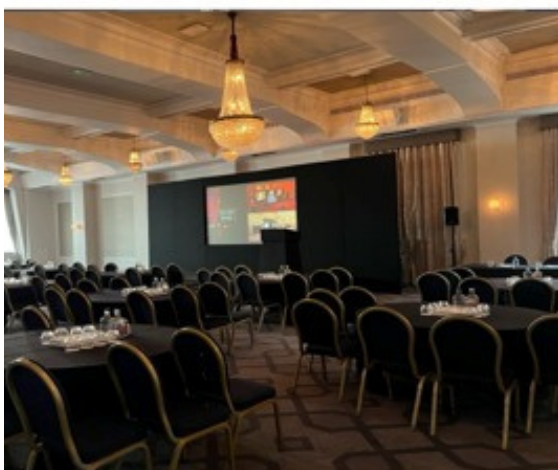
We met in London. We were both being awarded for excellence in our own fields, him for politics and me for entertainment. We just met at that event and all of us, the organisers, he, and I met for breakfast early morning on Republic Day I remember. I'm going to sound very filmy, but you guys have to believe it... I just knew... this was the man I had been waiting for all my life and we just started talking and it just felt right from day one. And thankfully he was single and thankfully everything checked out.



Bollywood star Parineeti Chopra and Member of Parliament and politician Raghav Chadha married on September 24, in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

*We are delighted that Parineeti Chopra's and Raghav Chadha's love story began at the Achievers Honours 2023. We congratulate them on their wedding and wish them a lifetime of happiness and success.*

*Team Achievers Honours*



**De Vere Grand Connaught Rooms**  
Located in the Heart of Central London  
37 flexible meeting, training, conference and  
events spaces for up to 1500 people  
E: [Divya.Chavan@devere.com](mailto:Divya.Chavan@devere.com)



# THE FUTURE





# OF EDUCATION

Education is on the cusp of transformative change, in a world where technology is evolving at an unprecedented pace, making previously unheard practices almost ubiquitous, where aspirations know no bounds, and imagination is set free to leap, explore, conceptualise and custom design a future that not just enhances pedagogical strategies to cater to diverse learning needs but also ensures it protects the integrity of the people and the planet. Over the next few pages, our experts tell you how this future unfolds...

# Complementing Higher Education with New Waves of EdTech Disruptions

## Utkarsh Amitabh

Noteworthy education researchers and moral philosophers suggest that higher education has intrinsic value, i.e., it matters in and of itself. They consider the pursuit of higher education to be the ultimate reward and add that we should be skeptical of reducing it as a means towards an end. However, most people decide to get a college/advanced degree because it provides a pathway to learn new skills, find a better job, expand their network, demonstrate their future employability, and augment their quality of life. That is why it is useful to think of higher education as an amorphous bundle of benefits stacked together that collectively offers insurance, social status, and marker readiness, in addition to the joy of learning.

The application of technology to different aspects of this “bundle” is commonly referred to as education technology or edtech. At its core, edtech promises to reduce cost and scale learning outcomes for different stakeholders. Several companies have tried to disrupt higher education by trying to build an Oxford or Stanford on the internet at 1% of the cost, but the results have not been favorable. That’s why promising edtech companies are now involved in the unbundling of education, i.e., trying to build products and services that help learners achieve specific outcomes, instead of reinventing the entire experience from the ground up. 85% of the jobs of 2030 do not exist today and the cost of pursuing higher education is increasing at eight times the median wage.

A new approach toward learning is the need of the hour.

Having built Network Capital, one of the world’s largest career transition platforms, and invested in several fast-



Utkarsh Amitabh is the CEO of mentorship platform Network Capital and the CMO of blockchain unicorn 5ire. He writes for Harvard Business Review and has authored two books and two more forthcoming in 2024. He studied moral philosophy at the University of Oxford and has an MBA from INSEAD. Utkarsh worked at Microsoft for 7 years, represented the World Economic Forum Global Shapers in Davos, and is also an angel investor in more than 20 early stage companies.

growing edtech companies, I have witnessed three tectonic shifts that are likely to unbundle and re-bundle higher education into something relevant to the demands of the 21st century.

The first wave includes channels of learning hard skills with direct employment prospects. Think of coding boot camps, Massive Open Online Courses with certifications and nanodegrees, for example. These are huge opportunities, but very few such disruptions have scaled so far. To make them work, the learning-to-earning link needs to be reinforced, with the help of governments and the private sector. As a partner to Government of India’s NITI Aayog, Network Capital has enabled mentorship for 7.5 million students. That said, a lot more needs to be done.

A big reason that people choose to go for higher studies is for networking, and that is where the second wave of disruption is likely.

Alternatives to traditional networking in the form of coworking spaces, accelerators, private networks, curated associations, and peer-mentoring communities are likely to be another area of massive disruption.

Along with hard skills and networks, there is likely to be a huge push for soft skills. Several innovations can be expected in this space in the coming years.

The ones that will work are likely to be able to demonstrate tangible benefits for students and young professionals. To conclude, new waves of education disruptions have the potential to offer a useful complement to traditional learning avenues. Whether they will be able to offer viable substitutes is an unanswered question.

Can it happen? Absolutely. Is it imminent? Data tells otherwise.

# Bridging the International Student Employability and University Ecosystems gap

## Ayesha Goyal

The narrative around employability for international students in the UK often spotlights regulatory hurdles and perceived limited opportunities. However, the reality is much brighter. The revival of the Graduate Visa [Post Study Work Visa] and issuance of over 100,000 visas under this route as of September 2023 marks the UK as a leading destination for international talent.

However, two challenges stand out:

1. Only 3% of employers have engaged with the Graduate Visa route, with over 50% unaware of its existence. [Higher Education Policy Institute, 2023]
2. Feedback from 500 international students revealed a daunting job application process, with over 80% being rejected before the interview stage, indicating a systemic issue in their presentation to potential employers. [LeapBeyond Data]

This highlights a gap not in policy, but in the awareness and utilization of opportunities. It pinpoints to the root issue: international students possess ample skills but often lack precise guidance to effectively adapt to the UK's unique employment ecosystem.

### ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

This journey sheds light on a key question: Can we scale up the individual mentorship successes for ALL international students across the UK? It points directly to universities as potential game-changers. The great news is that solving this issue isn't about teaching new skills from scratch but fine-tuning students' existing abilities to match the UK job market - an easier problem to solve. Universities have a prime opportunity to step in and fill this gap with targeted guidance and resources.



Ayesha Goyal is the founder of Leap Beyond - an innovative online platform that connects university students with professionals from top companies for career guidance. A Nottingham University graduate and former EY London strategy consultant, her experiences as an international student inspired her entrepreneurial venture. Leap Beyond has assisted already over 500 students in launching their careers and aims to revolutionise the way international students approach their career paths in the UK.

Three pillars of the new university ecosystem :

If we were to envision an ideal university ecosystem geared towards enhancing employability for international students, it would encompass three key pillars:

#### 1. Global Career Integration Center (GCIC):

The first pillar, the Global Career Integration Center (GCIC), would serve as a vital bridge connecting career services with the international office. This centre's mission would be straightforward: prepare international students for the UK job market right from their arrival, or ideally, even before. Key training sessions would focus on understanding the UK employment ecosystem, understanding cultural differences, and providing a success roadmap tailored to international students' unique journeys.

#### 2. Employer Engagement:

The Employer Engagement Initiative under GCIC would facilitate a continuous dialogue with key recruitment managers. This program would specifically aim to increase awareness among companies about the graduate visa route, by bringing to light the potential of international graduates, this initiative would help bridge the information gap, ensuring that insights from the corporate world directly inform the GCIC's training programs. This feedback loop is vital in constantly refining how international students are prepared, aligning their profiles more closely with UK employers.

#### 3. A Peer Mentorship Network:

This network would give every international student access to other students from their home country who have already succeeded in securing jobs and internships in the UK. Such direct access to mentors with shared cultural backgrounds and academic pathways provides invaluable, tailored guidance.

# The Transformative Potential of Integrating Artificial Intelligence into Education

## Somdip Dey

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) stands as a beacon of transformative potential. This fusion promises to revolutionise how we impart and absorb knowledge, catering to the diverse needs of learners while preparing them for a future intertwined with technological advancements.



The integration of AI in education heralds a new era of personalised, accessible, and future-oriented learning.

### Personalised Learning Pathways

One of the most significant contributions of AI to education is the creation of personalised learning experiences. AI systems, through data analysis and learning algorithms, can identify individual strengths and weaknesses of students. This enables the tailoring of curriculum and teaching methods to suit each learner's pace and style, a stark contrast to the one-size-fits-all approach prevalent in traditional educational settings.

Somdip Dey, FRSA, also professionally known as InteliDey, is an Embedded Artificial Intelligence scientist, entrepreneur, music producer and a TEDx speaker. Dey is the CEO of Nosh Technologies, a Lecturer of Data Science at York St John University, and a Professor of Practice (AI/ML) at the Woxsen University. He is also an alumnus of University of Manchester.

### Real-World Skill Development

The modern world demands digital literacy and adaptability. Incorporating AI into education not only familiarises students with emerging technologies but also equips them with skills crucial for future careers. Problem-solving, critical thinking, and adaptability are competencies honed when students interact with and learn from AI systems. For example, OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google Bard can provide excellent learning opportunities for such students.

### Enhanced Accessibility and Inclusivity

AI tools break down geographical and physical barriers, offering remote learning options and accessible resources for students with disabilities. Speech-to-text features, for instance, aid learners with hearing impairments, while AI-driven programmes can adjust content delivery for those with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, ensuring education is more inclusive.

### Automated Administrative Tasks

Teachers often find themselves bogged down by administrative duties. AI can automate tasks such as grading and scheduling, freeing educators to focus on teaching and personalised student interaction. This shift can enhance the quality of education, with teachers investing more time in creative and critical teaching approaches.

### Ethical Considerations and Challenges

However, this integration is not without challenges. Data privacy, ethical considerations around AI, and the digital divide are pertinent issues. Ensuring equitable access to technology and addressing concerns about data misuse are crucial steps in realising the full potential of AI in education. To summarise, the integration of AI into education heralds a new era of personalised, accessible, and future-oriented learning. As we navigate this exciting juncture, it is imperative to address the challenges head-on, ensuring that AI serves as a tool for enhancing education inclusively and ethically. The future of education is not just about learning alongside AI; it's about evolving with it.

# Transforming Education for a Sustainable Future

## Ajit Muthayil and Asheer Rahman

As we stand at the crossroads of the 21st century, the future of education beckons us to reevaluate our approach, with sustainability at the forefront. The inception of novel civic universities in the 20th century, with a specific emphasis on science and engineering, signified the shift from the Industrial Revolution to the era of modernity. However, the present urgency of addressing environmental challenges and net zero targets (emissions need to be reduced by 45% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.) demands a paradigm shift in education, transcending geographical boundaries and forging novel alliances between academia and industry across the borders. The traditional model of education is giving way to dynamic, interdisciplinary curricula that integrate environmental consciousness into every facet of learning. Despite over 9,000 companies and 1,000 cities joining the Race to Zero, we still fall short. The transformative focus should shift to cultivating eco-literate individuals ready to address the very complex environmental challenges. As we delve into a futuristic data-driven world, leading and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, the Internet of things (IOT), augmented reality, machine learning, robotics and blockchain pivots the industry to deliver sustainable alternatives. Given that the manufacturing and production sector contributes to a fifth of global carbon emissions and consumes 54% of the world's energy, industry-led research and development teams are channelling efforts to embed emerging technologies to address these very important environmental challenges. These sustainable innovations aim to propel each sector towards net-zero targets and at the same time should empower students to understand, analyse and take steps to solve



Ajith Muthayil, FRSA is the Founder and Managing Director of NodeIN Instruments. As an advocate for sustainability, Ajith's vision propels the company towards delivering innovative, eco-friendly solutions to help achieve net zero targets. Ajith has an MBA from the University of Westminster and a BE in Electronics from the University of Madras.



Asheer Rahman, FRSA, co-founder of NodeIN Instruments, is an expert in venture capital, fundraising, ESG investing, climate tech, and carbon offsetting. He is committed to aiding marginalized communities and advancing climate action. Asheer has a MSc in Project Management from the University of West of Scotland and BE in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Calicut.

sustainability issues in real-world contexts.

As students become global citizens, exposed to diverse perspectives and experiences, they are better equipped to comprehend the interconnectedness of environmental issues. Joint programs between universities and industries from different continents enable the exchange of ideas, best practices, and solutions. This not only enriches the educational experience but also prepares students to address the complexities of a globally interdependent world.

The industry sector, recognizing its pivotal role in shaping the future, is increasingly investing in sustainable education through its R&D, L&D and engineering excellence centres. We at NodeIN Instruments are committed to providing eco-friendly solutions and are heavily investing in our R&D capabilities.

We have had conversations about establishing an IIOT excellence centre in collaboration with a leading university from the Silicon City of India. This symbiotic relationship ensures that educational institutions produce graduates with the skills and mindset required for a sustainable future, whilst businesses benefit from a workforce adept at addressing environmental challenges. The future of education lies in a harmonious blend of innovation and collaboration, with sustainability as the guiding principle.

By embracing transnational partnerships, leveraging cutting-edge technologies, and fostering collaboration between academia and industry, we can pave the way for a generation of individuals who are not only academically proficient but also equipped to lead the charge towards a more sustainable and resilient future. As we embark on this transformative journey, the synergy between education and sustainability will undoubtedly shape the trajectory of our collective future.

# The Global Landscape of Sports Education: Nurturing Athletes and Shaping Industries

## Deepthi Bopaiah

In the profound words of Nelson Mandela, "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does." Indeed, sports possess transformative potential, not merely as a source of entertainment but as a force for social change and economic prosperity. The evolution of sports management owes much to the escalating commercialization of sports. Major events like the Olympics, FIFA World Cup, Indian Premier League, Super Bowl, and Esports have transcended borders, captivating global audiences and generating substantial revenue. This surge of capital has spurred a significant transformation within the sports industry, prompting a renewed emphasis on professional management practices. Consequently, the industry has transitioned from a niche domain to a vibrant and multifaceted sector teeming with opportunities for growth and innovation.

However, beyond economic implications, sports play a pivotal role in promoting public health and well-being. Regular physical activity encouraged by sports participation contributes to improved health outcomes, thereby reducing healthcare costs and benefiting society as a whole. Initially focused on event organization and logistics, sports management has diversified to encompass various disciplines such as marketing, finance, facility management, athlete representation, and sports analytics. Digital technologies and social media have further revolutionized the sports industry, enabling organizations to engage fans, analyze performance data, and optimize business operations. Recognizing the escalating demand for skilled professionals in sports management, educational institutions worldwide offer specialized programs



Deepthi Bopaiah is the CEO of GoSports Foundation. As a Chevening Gurukul fellow from the University of Oxford, Deepthi's leadership has seen the Foundation grow in impact and play a role in the journeys of nearly 50 Olympians and Paralympians, including 10 Paralympic medallists. She is currently serving on the committee of Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), an initiative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs, to support emerging and elite athletes in their quest to win Olympic and Paralympic medals. Deepthi also holds an MBA from the Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies, and has done a 6 year stint at HSBC before moving to sport administration in 2012.

Sports play a pivotal role in promoting public health and well-being

tailored to students' interests and career aspirations. These programs equip students with the knowledge, skills, and practical experience necessary to thrive in the competitive sports industry.

In India, where sports management is burgeoning, students are increasingly interested in pursuing careers in this field. The surge of leagues, Olympic, and Paralympic performances, alongside the Fit India movement's focus, has fueled this interest. Indian students are increasingly exploring opportunities for sports education internationally, particularly in the UK, where renowned institutions offer comprehensive programs.

At the heart of sports education lies the acknowledgement that the industry thrives because of athletes. Behind every milestone and record-breaking achievement are individuals who push the boundaries of human potential. However, their success narrative remains incomplete without recognizing the legion of professionals tirelessly supporting and nurturing their talents.

As we navigate the intricacies of sports education and industry advancement, it is imperative to prioritize creating a flourishing and equitable environment where athletes can shine and derive sustenance from their passion.

Equipping future generations with top-tier education programs and professionals ensures an inspiring and sustainable future for the sports industry and the athletes who propel its success. ■

# Rethinking Education: From Imitation to Innovation

Britain and India have historical educational ties we cannot overlook. In 2022, according to Hannah Ellis-Petersen, the Guardian's South Asia correspondent, almost 140,000 Indian students came to the UK, and almost a quarter of all visas were granted to Indian nationals in 2022 – the highest of any nationality – 55% of those were for students.

This massive movement of people impacts Britain's trade, income, social landscape, healthcare and security deeply and in many unexpected ways.

## HOW IT USED TO BE

Gina Yashere is a brilliant and amusing British comedian of Nigerian descent. In her usual wit, she argues that in African families, a child has got four choices of career: Doctor, lawyer, engineer, and...disgrace to the family. Yashere says that her mum picked a profession for her before she was born. When her mother was pregnant, "someone went up to her and asked, 'What are you having?' She was like, 'I'm having a doctor.' And that was it. When Yashere decided to become a comedian, she immediately slipped abysmally into category four, and thus became a "disgrace to the family." Sadly, career choices are rather limited in developing countries. The more underdeveloped the country, the less importance is given to passion and talent, which are sacrificed at the altar of social status, economic gains and quick returns. And for many Asian and African families, those quick returns would come if their child became a doctor, lawyer or engineer. COVID-19 changed our social, educational and professional world. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has changed the way we think, research and write. Education is changing so rapidly. Career choices are being untied from the bondage of parents' unfulfilled personal dreams, prestige, social status or financial returns. COVID-19 accelerated these changes in vertiginous ways. It is becoming more common for youth to focus on talent,



Professor Luis G Franceschi, Assistant Secretary General of the Commonwealth  
 Prof Luis G. Franceschi, LLB, LL.M, LL.D is the Assistant Secretary General of the Commonwealth. He coordinates the Political, Democracy, Electoral, Public Sector Governance, Good Offices, Rule of Law, Judicial Transformation, Human Rights, and Countering Violence and Extremism work in the 56 member countries. He is also the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting - CHOGM Conference Secretary, and, together with the Head of the Host Country Task Force, oversees the organisation and negotiations throughout the meeting. Prof Franceschi was the founding Dean of Strathmore Law School. As a thinker, educator and writer, he loves positive and disruptive innovation.

passion, ability.

These changes place a greater responsibility on educational institutions, and specifically on universities.

University education should be at the forefront of innovation; universities are called to be talent hubs and passion igniters.

University education should be a development pacesetter. It should make the societal box grow bigger so that thinking outside the box becomes the norm.

What should be the expected output of our educational system? What type of professional are we looking for? What are the values and strengths of our current graduates and how should we adjust, improve or change that? Education is not limited to a few years in primary and secondary school. Education is a continuum; it lasts a lifetime. It has a beginning, but it has no end, because today's education changes the destiny of future generations.

## I REFUSE TO BELIEVE

I refuse to believe that in the 21st century, an information technology graduate or undergraduate student should still sit six or seven hours a day just to listen to theory for the sake of meeting a threshold of "contact-hours" determined by regulation, instead of designing new applications, new concepts.

It makes no sense to teach commerce through long and boring theoretical sessions instead of drawing up plans to do real or simulated commerce, create new enterprises, simulate stock markets, mergers and acquisitions, etc. I also refuse to believe that a law student can graduate without having stepped into a court of law, a law firm or a legal office; without having spoken in public, without having made a presentation, or without reading a judgement. It would be like a doctor, who has never touched a corpse or seen blood.

Universities have to re-imagine >>

themselves. University reforms call for the courage and innovative thinking of authorities and the openness of the regulators. A mind shift that focuses on regulating the output rather than the process.

Most universities and university regulators are still stuck on “à la carte” menu. And this menu includes inflexible courses that must be taken. The approach is “you have chosen this career; these are your subjects and you must take them all to get a degree.” While this was sensible in the past, today’s life is quite complex. A good lawyer needs to know IT and economics; a good politician should know the law and finances; a good journalist needs to specialize and may need to study medicine, law, sociology or economics .

Straight jacketing students into one exclusive profession in an interdisciplinary virtual world is not wise. The modern university student should not be rigidly pushed into an “à la carte” menu. A student should rather be given buffet options, a pool of subjects to choose from, and mix, with proper guidance and mentorship. This way, students can prepare their own menu and come up with wise combinations without compromising the depth and thoroughness of their own (major) choice. It would be so much more relevant for a journalist to graduate with a combined degree in journalism and law or economics; and for a lawyer to get a degree in law and economics, law and IT, at the speed they can muster. In the post-COVID world, we should be aware of the importance and advantages of hybrid teaching systems, blended learning, and ways to flip the classroom.

#### WHY ARE UNIVERSITIES SO RIGID?

We may identify in the rigidity of our university education three key factors: First, superficial and poorly designed regulations that apply in the same way to different courses. For example, when it comes to ‘contact-hours’ our regulations apply to every course, whether it may be jurisprudence, anatomy, AI or calculus. Second, the laziness of our lecturers to think outside the box and come up with attractive and innovative ways of delivering the subject in an appealing fashion, for example, making use of



Prof. Luis launching Living Bridge magazine in 2023 along with Maddalaine Ansell, Director Education, British Council, Ruhi Khan, Editor of Living Bridge and Sanam Arora, Chairperson NISAU.

**The virtual age will challenge our humanity, our values, our ways and beliefs in manners we cannot predict.**

alternative aids such as simulation exercises, research and writing, games, etc.

This requires commitment. Students are often taught by uninspired lecturers, who abuse repetitive teaching aids and learn to read slide after slide of PowerPoint presentations that lack the power to make the point.

Third, the greed that has led our universities to fall into the vice of ‘massification’, admitting unmanageable numbers of students and compromising quality education for the sake of short-term financial gain. This makes it practically

impossible to allow students to crossbreed from faculty to faculty. It would be too complex.

#### BEWARE OF ELECTIONS

We should not forget that in 2024 both India and the UK will be in an election year when public discourse is often impulsive, unbalanced, partisan, shallow and focused on short-term gains. We hope education policy will not be changed in detrimental ways for the sake of a few hundred votes.

The virtual age will challenge our humanity, our values, our ways and beliefs in manners we cannot predict. How we identify goods, create and transact money and things, how we protect men and women, nature, life and freedom without jeopardizing further and greater developments, will all be challenged and put to test. This is an exciting challenge for humanity, and education will give it a sense of direction.

The way ahead is stimulating, intriguing, fascinating. But it should not be business as usual; this is the time for innovation; Indeed, we must move from imitation to innovation. ■





MEET YOUR

**FINALISTS**

# Arts, Culture & Entertainment



**Asma Khan** | Chef and Founder, Darjeeling Express  
King's College London

Dr. Asma Khan, from legal academia to culinary fame, founded Darjeeling Express, starting as a home supper club. Her success led to roles as UN World Food Programme's Chef Advocate and on the Mayor of London's Business Advisory, recognition in "Chef's Table," and topping Business Insider's 2019 coolest food and drink list.

**Atul Khatri** | Comedian  
University of Manchester

Atul Khatri, a Mumbai entrepreneur turned comedian, pursued stand-up to fulfill a personal goal. Blending his engineering and management background, he humorously orders soup "one by two" solo. Celebrated among India's top 20 comedians by CNN-IBN and a 'CEOs Got Talent' winner, his Netflix special in 2019 showcased his global appeal.



**Devanshi Rungta** | Co-founder, Art Rickshaw  
Royal College of Arts

Devanshi, deeply committed to art and community, co-founded Art Rickshaw to increase art access. As Kalfest's curator, she initiated a street art movement that sparked conversations in unique spaces. Her work has been featured in institutions like the V&A and Centre Pompidou. A recent RCA graduate, she is currently researching ways to democratise the art of cultural preservation.

**Nilanjana Bhowmick** | Author & Journalist  
Birmingham City University

Nilanjana Bhowmick is an esteemed journalist and author with a career spanning over twenty years. With a Master's in International Journalism from Birmingham City University, she started at BBC World Service, contributed to TIME Magazine, and edited at Agency EFE-EPA. Her work appears in National Geographic, The Guardian, and The Washington Post. She is currently an Editor at UN Women.



# Arts, Culture & Entertainment

**Tanya Paul** | Art Director & Creative Designer  
Birmingham City University

Tanya, a globally acclaimed Creative Designer, holds the prestigious title of No.1 Art Director by Cannes Lions. Tanya has shaped brands like Google Pay, Uber, and Twitter with her creative prowess over nine years. Her work, celebrated by CANNES, D&AD, and others, earned her a National Award for Creative Arts. Now in Toronto, she impresses clients like CIBC and LYFT with her innovative strategies.



---

**Vishal Ramakrishnan** | Music Composer & Producer  
London College of Music, University of West London



Vishal Ramakrishnan, an alum of with nearly a decade of experience in music, co-founded Round, blending roles from film composing to advising music tech startups. Under his guidance, Round, leveraging proprietary technology, has become a global ally for artists, brands, and entertainment firms, bridging the gap between creativity and business in less than four years.

# Business & Entrepreneurship



**Eshita Kabra** | Founder & CEO, By Rotation  
Bayes Business School

Eshita Kabra, after witnessing textile waste impacts in Rajasthan, founded award winning app By Rotation in October 2019. As CEO, she's made it the largest shared wardrobe app in the UK and US, aiming to revolutionise fashion consumption. By Rotation fosters a community for sharing, monetising, and consciously consuming fashion, striving for sustainability.

**Harish R. Bhat** | Brand Custodian, Tata Sons  
University of Leeds

Harish Bhat, with 36 years at Tata, has held pivotal roles including Brand Custodian at Tata Sons, MD of Tata Global Beverages, and COO of Titan's Watches and Jewellery. Recognised by Forbes as a top CMO in 2022 and 2023, he's a passionate marketer and bestselling author of six books, also known for his columns and poetry.



**Mirra Sondhi** | MD, Deutsche Bank  
University of Leeds



Mirra, with 16 years in technology risk, is a Managing Director at Deutsche Bank and studied engineering in the UK. Overcoming challenges, she's earned accolades and is on TheCityUK's Next Generation Leadership Council. Recognised by Financial Times for her leadership and influence, she advocates for diversity, speaking at the UK Parliament on Women in Technology.

**Neha Chauhan** | Founder, Aviotron Aerospace (AeroBay)  
Cranfield University

Neha is an entrepreneur revolutionising education with Experiential Learning and a background in Aerospace Thermal Power Propulsion, including NASA projects. She's a Shark Tank India contestant, a British U.K Alumni awardee in 2020, and represented India at TiE Global Summit, Dubai Expo 2021. She received the Best Startup of the Year award with a \$10,000 grant in 2019, and is empowering thousands of women and underprivileged kids through Aviotron Aerospace.



# Business & Entrepreneurship

**Shefali Jhalani** | Founder, Sharisa  
Brunel University

Shefali Jhalani, founder of Sharisa, a skincare-infused makeup brand, defies norms and redefines beauty. Beyond leading a clean beauty revolution, she's a roller-skating record holder in the Limca Book of Records. Her dual achievements in beauty and sports highlight her innovative spirit and commitment to celebrating individuality.



**Suchin Bajaj** | Founder & Director, Ujala Cygnus Hospitals  
King's College London



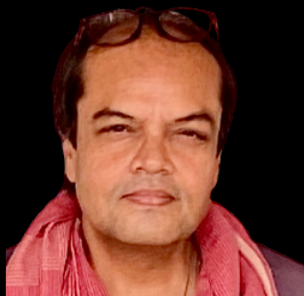
Dr. Shuchin Bajaj, an accomplished medical professional and Founder Director of Ujala Cygnus Hospitals, operates twenty hospitals across Delhi, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Haryana. With 2000+ beds and 3000+ employees, his vision is to bring super speciality and emergency healthcare to India's district towns lacking such facilities.

**Yash Prakash** | Co-founder, AcadAlly  
University of Southampton

Yash Prakash, co-founder of AcadAlly, leverages data analytics for customized learning experiences by analyzing student patterns and addressing educational gaps. With degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Business Administration, he was named in the "BW BusinessWorld Disrupt List of Young Achievers 30 under 30" in November 2023, honouring top Indian entrepreneurs.



# Government & Politics



**Anshul Avijit** | National Spokesperson, Indian National Congress  
University of Cambridge

Dr. Anshul Avijit, the national spokesperson for the Indian National Congress, is a prominent figure in political discourse, engaging in press conferences and debates in Hindi and English. Educated in Delhi, London, and Cambridge, he holds a doctoral degree from King's College, Cambridge, and has a background in journalism and scholarly writing across diverse subjects.

---

**Lt Cdr Bidisha Pandey** | Military Veteran, Director - Trade, Austrade  
University College London

After retiring from the Indian Navy in July 2021, Lt Cdr Bidisha Pandey pursued an MSc in Prosperity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship at University College London as a Commonwealth Scholar. Now with the Australian Trade and Investment Commission, she facilitates bilateral trade between India and Australia, leading in Aerospace, Advanced Manufacturing, and Space sectors.



---

**Conrad Sangma** | Chief Minister, Meghalaya  
Imperial College London



Conrad Sangma is the 12th and current Chief Minister of Meghalaya, India, assuming office in 2018. A member of the National People's Party, he comes from a political lineage. Conrad served as a Member of Parliament from Tura (2016–2018). Notably, he received the Best Project Award at the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2022 for Meghalaya Enterprise Architect, showcasing his commitment to technological advancements.

---

**Jaya Bhagat** | Principal Accountant General, CAG India  
London School of Economics and Political Science

Jaya Bhagat, a senior civil servant in India has spearheaded anti-corruption probes in public health and municipal sectors. She initiated a peer-to-peer knowledge exchange among governments across 28 countries. Through the 'Pension at your Doorstep' program, she employed digital solutions, aiding 28,000 seniors to resolve pension issues from home.



# Government & Politics

**Jayesh Ranjan** | Principal Secretary - Industries & Commerce & IT, Government of Telangana  
London School of Economics and Political Science

As a seasoned civil servant, Jayesh Ranjan's role includes policy development, investment attraction, and leveraging technology for governance and citizen empowerment. Under his leadership, Telangana has become a prime investment hub, especially in IT, life sciences, defense, aerospace, textiles, and food processing sectors.



**Prachetas Bhatnagar** | Head of Strategy & Ops, Policy & Politics, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, London  
London School of Economics and Political Science

Prachetas advises global government leaders on strategy and policy. Formerly at McKinsey & Company and UNICEF India, he holds an LSE Masters in Public Policy. The Times of India featured him in their 2023 Inspirational News Journeys. Additionally, he was a National Level Swimmer in India.



**Siddharth Sinha** | Geospatial & Climate Policy Lead, Google  
London School of Economics and Political Science

Siddharth heads Geospatial and Climate Policy at Google in India, having advised India's G20 Sherpa and facilitated African Union's engagement with the G20. Formerly, he served as OSD to the CEO of NITI Aayog and represented India at OECD-ITF. He was selected for Yale's 2024 Emerging Climate Leader's Fellowship. Additionally, he founded Uddeshya, an Indian NGO empowering youth.



**Uma Mahadevan** | Additional Chief Secretary, Panchayat Raj, Government of Karnataka  
University of Oxford

Uma Mahadevan, a seasoned Indian civil servant with three decades of experience, specialises in rural development, women and child welfare, disability rights, skill development, planning, and agriculture. Notably, she contributed as a Member of the ECCE Task Force and is an avid writer on developmental topics.



# Law



**Akhil Ennamsetty** | Fellow - Clinton Global Initiative, Advocate,  
High Court for the State of Telangana  
University of Edinburgh

During his postgraduate studies at the University of Edinburgh, Akhil Ennamsetty emerged as a passionate advocate for social justice. Elected to the NUS UK & Scotland in 2019, he represented international students amid critical times. A Clinton Global Initiative University Fellow, Akhil founded the 'Centre for Rights Activism' and now practices law at the Telangana High Court, focusing on criminal defence, constitution, and human rights.

---

**Karuna Nundy** | Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India  
University of Cambridge

Karuna Nundy, an Advocate at the Supreme Court of India and an international legal expert, collaborates with governments on constitutional and legal drafting. Time Magazine recognized her among the 100 most influential people globally in 2022-2023. BBC termed her a 'leading lawyer', while the New York Times hailed her as a 'leading civil liberties lawyer' for her work on free expression.



**Pranay Lekhi** | Associate - International Arbitration team,  
Allen & Overy LLP  
University of Cambridge

Pranay Lekhi, a dual-qualified lawyer in India and England/Wales, practices public international law and international arbitration at Allen & Overy, London. Specialising in inter-State cases and international arbitrations, he earned his LLM in international law from the University of Cambridge, receiving the Senior Harris Scholarship from Downing College.

---

**Raveena Kumari Sethia** | Senior Associate, Shardul  
Amarchand Mangaldas & Co  
University of Cambridge

Raveena K Sethia (or Lalit) is a Senior Associate in the competition law practice at Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co. She advises on Indian antitrust law, mergers, and enforcement. She is a visiting faculty at Jindal Global Law School. She also promotes women in law through Her Forum and has co-founded the AVSRAK Foundation. Raveena, a silver medalist from Jindal Global Law School in 2017, pursued her LLM as a Justice Pratibha M Singh and Trust Scholar at the University of Cambridge in 2017-18.





# Law

**Samridhi Arora** | Advocate-on-Record, Supreme Court of India; Member, UNESCO-IFAP (WGIA)  
University of Oxford

Samridhi Arora, a seasoned Advocate at the Supreme Court of India, serves as a member of UNESCO-IFAP (WGIA) and chairs the AI4IA Conference. Committed to making justice accessible, she earned a post-graduation degree from the University of Oxford and pursued Executive Education at Harvard Kennedy School, focusing on public policy. She has championed landmark judgments benefiting the underprivileged and disabled.



---

**Siddharth Suresh Chandrashekhar** | Advocate and Legal Counsel, MHADA  
Queen Mary University of London



Siddharth Chandrashekhar, an Indian qualified lawyer, holds an LL.M. from London, UK. He advises startups on corporate documentation, litigation, and Alternative Dispute Resolution. Additionally, he represents various Indian government agencies including DRI, CBIC, CBDT, MHADA, and BMC. He is also known for his advocacy in Animal Rights.

---

# Media & Journalism



**Kunal Purohit** | Independent Journalist & Filmmaker  
School of Oriental and African Studies

Kunal Purohit, a distinguished journalist, documentary filmmaker, and podcast creator, has spent over two decades delving into issues concerning development, politics, inequality, and the surge of Hindu nationalism. Honored with prestigious accolades including the Ramnath Goenka Award and the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, he holds an MSc in Development Studies from SOAS, London, as a Felix Scholar.

**Mehar Kaur Sindhu** | Founder & CEO, MSB Vision  
Imperial College London

With over 8 years of corporate experience spanning KPMG, EY, and various startups, Mehar specialises in strategy. As a Chartered Accountant with an MBA from Imperial College London, Mehar leads MSB Vision, focusing on empowering career growth. Her expertise has earned recognition on prestigious platforms like BBC, TEDx, and Times of India, reflecting her commitment to facilitating individual career advancement.



**Nisha Narayanan** | Veteran Broadcast Media Journalist  
Cardiff University

Nisha Narayanan, a seasoned media professional with over 26 years in Broadcast Media, holds accolades spanning from Chevening Scholarship to the Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival award. As COO of Red FM & Magic FM, she spearheads innovative initiatives like Red Live and Red Podcasts, expanding Red FM's reach significantly.

**Puja Changoiwala** | Journalist and Author  
University of Westminster

Puja, an award-winning journalist and author of three acclaimed books, delves into narratives illuminating marginalised lives—from Mumbai's sewer divers to Odisha's water-starved villages and Kashmir's 'Internet Express' trains. Recognised as a 'storyteller of history', her work in esteemed global publications has sparked conversations, earned numerous awards, and catalysed change.



# Media & Journalism

**Saptarshi Basak** | Reporter and Editor - Opinions, The Quint  
London School of Economics and Political Science

Saptarshi Basak, a reporter and Opinions editor at The Quint, provided comprehensive coverage of the 2023 Manipur violence and delves into international issues. He holds master's degrees from the London School of Economics and Peking University, showcasing a diverse academic background complementing his journalistic expertise.



**Shrenik N Rao** | Editor-in-Chief, Madras Courier  
London School of Economics and Political Science

Shrenik Rao, Editor-in-Chief of the revitalized Madras Courier, a 236-year-old newspaper turned award-winning digital publication, is an alumnus of the London School of Economics and a 2016 Fellow at the University of Oxford's Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. A dedicated environmentalist, he cycled extensively across India, including Khardung-la, the world's highest motorable road.



**Sonia Singh** | Journalist, Senior TV Anchor, Author & Editor  
Cardiff University

Sonia Singh has been a journalist, senior television anchor, author & Editor of India's most respected news network, NDTV. In the last 3 decades, she has interviewed Prime Ministers, former Presidents, Nobel Laureates, and senior government ministers across political parties. She anchors the marquee interview show, 'The NDTV Dialogues', which brings together thought leaders in different fields for a conversation on Indian and global contemporary challenges.



# Society & Policy

**Aashraya Seth** | Social Innovator  
University of Cambridge



Aashraya, an acclaimed social innovator, created India's most affordable biodegradable sanitary pad vending machine. Founder of initiatives like STEMinism and Alvida Patriarchy, his projects, including Menstrual Hygiene Friendly Spaces, serve as models for MENA and ASEM countries. He leads development projects for British, Indian, and Australian governments, and ranks among India's top 80 social innovators and the world's top 50 emerging policy leaders.

**Prof Abhishek Mishra** | Former Politician  
University of Cambridge

A man of actions and intellect, Prof Abhishek Mishra has been in the public life because of his exemplary work in politics and social welfare. A socialist leader, former cabinet minister, socialist thinker, policy scholar, and strategist- Abhishek Mishra is a name that stands for credibility and integrity. A resident of Lucknow, his significant education was completed in Lucknow.



**Charan Kanwal Singh Sekhon** | Founder, SEVA Trust UK  
Cranfield University



Charan Sekhon MBE, a distinguished philanthropist, boasts 25 years of expertise in education, environment, project management, public relations, health, wellbeing, and yoga. As Senior Environment Officer for the Environment Agency (DEFRA), he spearheads numerous environmental and Equality & Diversity initiatives. Founder Chairman of SEVA Trust UK, and a dedicated local Councillor for over two decades, he actively supports youth, charity, and sports projects, leading fundraising campaigns and charity races, including the London Marathon, to raise substantial funds.

**Devika Malik** | Para - Athlete, Co-Founder - Wheeling  
Happiness Foundation  
University of Cambridge

Born with hemiplegia, Devika excelled to be an accomplished para-athlete, setting two new national records at the Asian Para Games. She's a psychological counselor, an international disability inclusion advocate, and a member of the Commonwealth Children & Youth Disability Network. Co-founder of Wheeling Happiness Foundation, she empowers financially underserved individuals with disabilities. Devika has received many accolades including the Queen's Young Leaders Award, National Youth Award India, and Forbes Under 30 recognition.



# Society & Policy

**Elsa Marie DSilva** | President, Red Dot Foundation Global  
University of Oxford

Elsa Marie DSilva is the Founder of Red Dot Foundation (India) and President of Red Dot Foundation Global (USA). She pioneered Safecity, a platform that crowdsources experiences of sexual violence worldwide. Safecity, launched in 2012, is the largest crowd map on the issue in India and beyond. ElsaMarie co-founded the Brave Movement to end global childhood sexual abuse and Beyond Black, an art-driven social enterprise.



**Gaurav Dwivedi** | Advisor to the Chhattisgarh Government  
Cardiff University



Gaurav, a seasoned public policy and branding communication expert, and journalist, has contributions featured in BBC and The Print. As Advisor to the Chhattisgarh Government, he crafted the state's film policy, transforming it into a prominent film destination. Formerly, he represented Uttar Pradesh at Cannes and IIFA Madrid and served as Vice Chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Film Development Council in 2015.

**Kushal Kandhar** | Global Pride Director, BCG  
University of Reading

Kushal is a distinguished researcher, author, speaker, and LGBTQ+ diversity advocate, recognized for his groundbreaking work. As the Global Pride@BCG Director at Boston Consulting Group, he spearheads LGBTQ+ diversity initiatives. A prolific writer and translator across multiple languages, Kushal focuses on representing LGBTQ+ themes, enriching literature and discourse.



**Vaibhav Sonone** | Development Practitioner  
University of Leeds



Vaibhav, a development practitioner and public speaker, hails from a marginalised community in rural Maharashtra. With over 8 years of experience in the Central Tribal Region, his efforts in Dhamanpani village, Mandla district, Madhya Pradesh, fostered self-sustainability and comprehensive development. He focuses his research on climate change, adaptation, indigenous communities, livelihood, and gender issues.

# Sports



**Anuj Kichlu** | Director & CEO, Best Of You Sports  
Loughborough University

Anuj Kichlu leads Best Of You Sports (India & South Asia), a Spanish-based sports agency with global reach, specializing in player management for 14 years. He's a member of FAWG (FIFA Agents Working Group) and holds board positions at Calcutta Cricket & Football Club and Tollygunge Inter Club Swimming Committee. Additionally, he's slated to join St. Xavier's College as a Guest Faculty in their new Sports Module starting July 2024.

---

**Nasser Aga Hussain** | Former Captain, Indian Rugby Team  
University of Northumbria

Former Indian Rugby team Captain, Nasser Aga Hussain, now drives Rugby's growth in India. A dynamic leader, he fosters excellence through discipline and teamwork. His Sport Management MSc equips him to navigate India's competitive sports market. Representing India internationally instilled professionalism and time management. Outside work, he enjoys adventure, travel, and networking.



---

**Neeraj Chopra** | Reigning Olympic and World Champion,  
Men's Javelin Throw  
Loughborough University



Neeraj Chopra is the reigning Olympic, world and Asian Games champion in men's javelin throw. He is also a former Commonwealth Games and Diamond League winner. From the Arjuna Award in 2018 to the Major Dhyani Chand Khel Ratna Award in 2021, and the prestigious Padma Shri in 2022, he has been consistently honoured for his contributions to Indian athletics. He is also recognised as The Times of India TOISA Sportsman of the Year in 2021.

---

**Smit Singh** | International Winner, Skeet Shooting  
University of Oxford

Smit Singh, a member of the Indian National Shooting Team, doubles as the President of the All India Professionals' Congress in Punjab. With seven international medals in Skeet shooting, he matched the World Record and held India's National Record for over six years. He advises Punjab's government on public policy and is an Associate at the Oxford India Centre for Sustainable Development. Smit received the esteemed Maharaja Ranjit Singh Award from the Punjab Government in 2019.



# Education, Science & Innovation



**Jeemon Panniyammakal** | Public Health Expert  
University of Glasgow

Dr. Jeemon Panniyammakal, a public health expert, combats cardiovascular disease in low-resource areas through epidemiological and policy research in India. Holding grants from prestigious international bodies like the Wellcome Trust and NIH, his work, with over 150,000 citations, significantly impacts chronic condition management.

---

**Nausheen Basha** | Engineer and Research Associate  
City, University of London

At 31, Nausheen, a Chartered Engineer and Research Associate at Imperial College London, specialises in computational fluid dynamics and machine learning. Recognized as one of the Top 50 Women in Engineering, her work on air compressors was crucial during India's COVID-19 crisis.



**Raghu Ram Pillarisetti** | Specialist in Breast Cancer Treatment  
Royal College of Surgeons

Dr. Raghu Ram Pillarisetti revolutionised breast cancer care in India, founding South Asia's first comprehensive Breast Health Centre and a charity for national awareness. He led South Asia's largest population-based screening program now expanding nationally across India. He also founded the Association of Breast Surgeons of India and was the driving force behind the formation the Association of Breast Surgeons of India.

---

**Sreenivasa Rao Kondapally Seshasai** | Cardiologist  
University of Cambridge

Dr. Kondapally, a leading Cardiologist and Head of Cardiology Education at St. George's Hospital, London, trained in India and the UK, and completed his MPhil & PhD at Cambridge with Commonwealth and Gates scholarships. His impactful research prompted significant advances in cardiology. He serves as Deputy National Audit Lead for the British Cardiovascular Intervention Society, a British Cardiovascular Society Emerging Leader, and an NHS Clinical Entrepreneur.



# Education, Science & Innovation

**Srikanth Ramaswamy** | Professor, Newcastle University  
University of Strathclyde

Dr. Ramaswamy, a Chevening Scholar alumnus, is a Professor of Computational Neuroscience at Newcastle University. He holds Marie Curie and Lister Institute Prize Fellowships, and is a Fulbright Visiting Professor at MIT. He leads Newcastle's Neural Circuits Laboratory, pioneering research integrating neuromodulatory principles into AI architecture design via experiments and computational models.



**Tanaya Narendra** | Sexual Health Educator & Embryologist  
University of Oxford



Dr. Tanaya, a University of Oxford graduate, pioneered medical content creation in India with her acclaimed initiative, Dr Cuterus. Addressing sexual, reproductive, and menstrual health, she leads India's largest medical education platform, complemented by a bestselling book and acclaimed podcast. Her mission reshapes sex education, aiming for a healthier, stigma-free society.

## Best Student Society



The Heriot-Watt Indian Society celebrates India's diverse culture, offering members opportunities to engage in festivals like Diwali and Holi, Indian classical dances, Bollywood restagings, music sessions, and culinary explorations. It welcomes students of Indian descent and those curious about Indian culture, fostering connections, heritage appreciation, and enjoyable experiences.



The UEL Indian Society, among the largest at UEL, welcomes all students irrespective of cultural background. Committed to enriching the UEL experience, they organize diverse events including social gatherings, sports tournaments, charity drives, cultural fairs, and educational trips. They aim to celebrate Indian culture, foster cultural exchange, and create a vibrant community for all interested individuals.



Warwick India Forum aims to raise awareness about India and provide a platform to address its socio-economic, political, cultural, and environmental issues. Hosting events year-round, including debates and social gatherings, they've featured renowned speakers like Shashi Tharoor and Kiran Bedi. Committed to enhancing India's global image, they aspire to become Europe's premier Indian conference.



# THE JURY 2024



**Prof Luis Gabriel Franceschi**  
Assistant Secretary General of  
the Commonwealth



**Subhash Ghai**  
Celebrated Indian Filmmaker



**Dr Andrew Fleming**  
British Deputy High  
Commissioner to Kolkata



**Dr Diana Beech**  
CEO, London Higher



**Anne Marie Graham**  
Chief Executive, UKCISA



**Jamie Arrowsmith**  
Director, Universities UK  
International



**Bobby Mehta**  
Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor,  
University of Portsmouth



**Kamini Gupta PhD**  
Lecturer, King's College London



**Sanam Arora**  
Founder and Chair,  
NISAU UK



**Alison Barrett**  
Director India,  
British Council



**Ruth Arnold**  
International Educational  
Consultant



# Indian Legislators visit Wales, draw inspiration from Well-Being of Future Generations Act





---

## Chaitanya Marpakwar

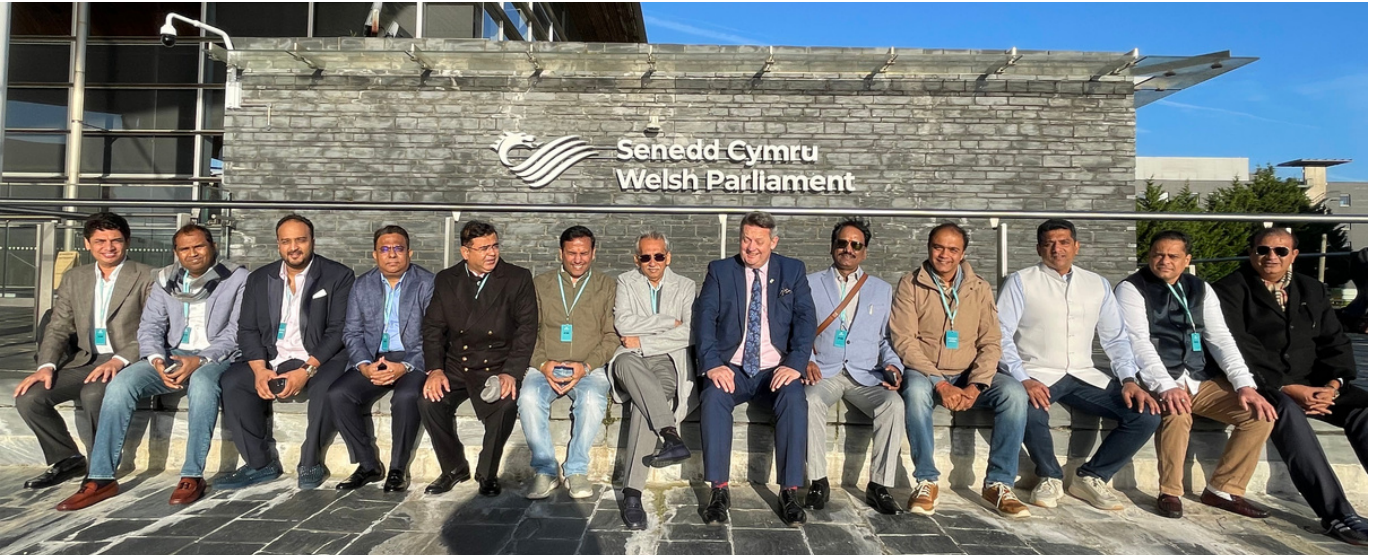
---

Members of the Legislative Assembly from Maharashtra took part in an executive program on Good Governance and Public Policy at the University of Wales Trinity, Saint David (UWTSD) ahead of the Year of Wales in India 2024.

This week-long learning exchange programme in November 2023 marked a significant and unique milestone in the relationship between Wales and India. It was the first of its kind, where twelve cross party legislators from Maharashtra participated in a university course,

which included classroom sessions, field trips, seminars and visits to the Welsh Senedd in Cardiff and the UK Parliament in London.

While legislators delved into different subjects and themes including interfaith dialogue, sustainable development, devolved governance and public policy, Wales' Well-Being of Future Generations Act generated the most interest. The legislators were so impressed that some are already working to move a similar bill in the Maharashtra legislature in 2024. >>



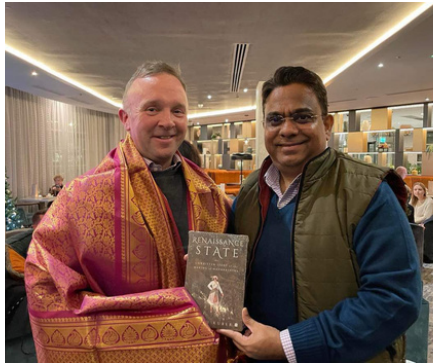
Maharashtra legislators visited the Welsh Senedd to understand how the devolved governance in Wales works as part of the UWTSD course in Nov 2023. (From left) Legislators Satyajeet Tambe (Independent), Mangesh Chavan (BJP), Zeeshan Siddique (Congress), Rais Shaikh (Samajwadi Party), Jaykumar Rawal (BJP), Ameet Zanak (Congress), Amin Patel (Congress), Alun Davies MS (Welsh Senedd Constituency Member, Welsh Labour), Ambadas Danve (Shiv Sena UBT), Pankaj Bhojar (BJP), Aslam Shaikh (Congress), Ameet Satam (BJP) and Mihir Kotecha (BJP)

# Wales' warm welcome

Legislators who participated in the programme described it as pathbreaking and a landmark in bringing Maharashtra and Wales closer. “The course brought us from the study table to the people. There was a lot of putting theory into practice. We explored several new ideas and also ways to implement it. All this was global but also uniquely local and regional. Having seen the demand for devolution in Wales and construction of the Welsh Senedd, and now visiting the Senedd as a Maharashtra legislator, this was life coming full circle for me. Maharashtra and Wales have many commonalities like language, identity and self pride. We share similar feelings about our region and its potential. The trip has opened many doors for Maharashtra and Wales to come together. Both are changing rapidly and there is a lot we can learn from each other,” said BJP legislator Jaykumar Rawal who was part of the programme and is a Cardiff University alumnus. While the lectures took place at UWTSD's Lampeter campus in the heart of Wales, the field visits included a trip to the Big Pit national Coal Museum, Cardigan Castle and the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT). In January 2024, a smaller

**WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT**  
 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act gives a legally-binding common purpose – the seven wellbeing goals – for national government, local government, local health boards and other specified public bodies. It details the ways in which specified public bodies must work, and work together to improve the well-being of Wales. It will make the public bodies listed in the Act think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

group of legislators including BJP's Ameet Satam and independent legislator Satyajeet Tambe visited Wales to meet FG Commissioner Derek Walker for a more detailed understanding of the Well-being of FG Act and take its introduction in Maharashtra forward. “The FG Act is unique just like the UWTSD programme that we attended. The experience, right from the stay in the student accommodation and field visits were eye opening. We hope to build on this and introduce the FG Bill in Maharashtra,” Satam, who is taking the lead in the efforts for the FG Act's introduction in Maharashtra, said. Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar >>



Rais Shaikh, MLA for the Bhiwandi East Constituency in Maharashtra gifts Darren Huges, Director Welsh NHS Confederation a book on Maharashtra, titled 'Renaissance State'.



The trip has opened many doors for Maharashtra and Wales to come together. Both are changing rapidly and there is a lot we can learn from each other

Jaykumar Rawal, BJP legislator and alumnus of Cardiff University

described the UWTSD programme as a resounding success, having a positive impact. He said among the several takeaways, the FG Act was the most interesting. “The feedback we received from the participants has been positive and all have expressed a keen interest to reciprocate the initiative,” Narwekar said.

Jeremy Smith, Dean of Institute of Education and Humanities at UWTSD who was part of the initiative along with Iestyn Davies, Pro-VC of UWTSD said that UWTSD found the legislators visit deeply enriching and valuable “UWTSD strongly shares the hope that we can jointly build on the reciprocal learning and cultural exchange of the visit. It is particularly heartening to hear of the interest generated during the visit into the origins and functioning of the FG Act and the subsequent dialogue that has opened up between the Maharashtra legislature and the Welsh government on this subject,” Smith said. Both the Maharashtra legislature and UWTSD are keen to make the visit an annual feature and a living bridge between Maharashtra and Wales.

*Chaitanya Marpakwar is an award-winning journalist with the Times of India based in Mumbai. He is an alumnus of Cardiff University and was the winner of the India-UK Achievers Honours in 2023 in the media and journalism category. He was the coordinator of the Maharashtra legislators programme at UWTSD, UK.*



# Year of Wales in India 2024: A real collaboration

Mitchell Theaker, Head of India for the Welsh government commended the programme organised by UWTSD as it fostered new dialogues and an opportunity to learn from one another’s experiences. “Programmes like this show how much we mean it when we say that Wales is an outward-facing, ambitious country. We believe in collaboration, learning and sharing best practices. Already we’re seeing some amazing results from the collaborations. The drive and ambition of the MLAs that joined us in Wales and what they’ve done since is remarkable. The progress of the work that has taken place shows that this was not a one-off, but a real and deep-rooted collaboration which we are eager to support,” Theaker said. Theaker called the programme the very essence of what the Year of Wales in India 2024 is all about. “India’s presence in Wales is deep-rooted and deeply valued. Wales in India 2024 is a chance for us to strengthen these ties, to celebrate them and to show how much we appreciate our relationship with India and Maharashtra. Wales’ relationship with Maharashtra spans decades and is deeply valued by the Welsh government and our partners. Wales is rightly proud of our Well-being of Future Generations (FG) Act. All nations face such a pivotal moment, particularly in relation to climate change, Acts such as this don’t only look to the future but they look at what the government can do now to secure the very real change we need to see,” Theaker said. Theaker said Wales in India 2024



A strong partnership: Rahul Narwekar, Maharashtra Assembly Speaker with Mitchell Theaker, Head of India for the Welsh government.



Congress legislator Amin Patel (third from left) felicitated Professor Medwin Hughes (second from left), former Vice-Chancellor of UWTSD with Mahatma Gandhi’s iconic charkha at London’s National Liberal Club. Legislators Jaykumar Rawal (Extreme left) and Mangesh Chavan (Extreme right) of the BJP look on.

will see a whole host of activities ranging from deepening educational partnerships in teaching and student exchanges to promoting both our countries’ rich culture and arts. “At our St David’s Day celebrations in February 2024 (in Mumbai), we will be launching our calendar of events that will cover everything in this space including our economic and sporting ties,” Theaker said. ■

# India has palpable ambition to drive forward through innovation: Pam Gosal

The first-ever delegation of cross-party Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) visited India in October 2023 to strengthen bilateral relations with a clear focus on three major sectors - education, trade and tourism. **Jetal Zala** spoke to **Pam Gosal, MSP** from the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party who was leading this delegation to India

## **JZ: What are the opportunities of the Scotland- India Educational tie-up?**

**PG:** India and Scotland already have an excellent relationship when it comes to education. Over 10,000 Indian students come to Scotland to study each year, making it the second largest international contributor of students to Scotland. But I am confident that this relationship can be improved even further in the future. We know that negotiations are ongoing for a UK-India trade deal. This trade deal provides an opportunity for more student visas to be granted.

During my recent delegation to India, I met with the ICCR where the possibility of further opportunities for Scottish students to study in India was raised. It was agreed that there was definitely more scope in the future for further pathways to be opened up to Scottish students in this area, whereby they may complete at least part of their degree in India.

## **JZ: What is the future of the International Higher Education sector of Scotland for Indian students, considering the current changes in the visa and immigration rules for international/ Indian students?**

**PG:** The new rules around student visas have been introduced due to the very high total net migration numbers in the UK, and it is yet to be seen whether these changes will discourage students from choosing to study at British universities, including those in Scotland.

Scottish universities are welcoming more international students than ever before, and this is unlikely to change in



Pam Gosal led the discussions on trade opportunities between India and Scotland with Piyush Goyal, Minister for Commerce & Industry in Delhi.

the coming years as international student fees have become an important part of universities' annual income. Scotland is lucky to have an outstanding reputation for higher education institutions on the world stage for many reasons, including its four separate ancient universities. I therefore hope that Indian students will still be coming to Scotland in high numbers regardless of the changes to the student visa system.

## **JZ: How do you see Indian students as the living bridge between India**

## **and the UK?**

**PG:** Indian students form an important part of the living bridge between India and the UK. As Convener of the CPG on India, I have held meetings before that focus on the cultural connections between Scotland and India, and it was clear during this meeting that the Indian student population does a lot of work to help keep these connections strong. This continual exchange of students over generations only helps strengthen the living bridge, and this will only grow further if we eventually see more opportunities for Scottish

students to study at least part of their degree in India.

The celebrations are well timed as the British Council celebrates India's 75th anniversary through the India/UK Together, Season of Culture – a year-long programme of cultural and educational partnerships that strengthen the living bridge between our two countries.

We're proud to be celebrating what India and the UK have achieved together and look forward to the next 75 years of partnership.

Science and education are at the heart of the India-UK relationship – as UK Research and Innovation states, since 2008, the UK and Indian governments and third parties have together invested over £300 million in co-funded research and innovation programmes. The India UK Roadmap 2030 signed by our two Prime Ministers puts the spotlight on education and science – further creating pathways for greater collaboration.

The recently announced Graduate Route and the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications agreement, which will allow UK Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral academic degrees to be recognised in India, are significant landmarks in our relationship and will facilitate greater mobility leading to greater exchange of ideas and knowledge. These initiatives are likely to enable more and more Indians to study at world-class UK.

**JZ: Tell us a little bit about your trip to India. What are your impressions of India?**

**PG:** As Convener of the CPG on India, and as the first Indian woman to be elected to the Scottish Parliament, I was hugely proud to lead the first-ever delegation of MSPs from the Scottish

**I hope that Indian students will still be coming to Scotland in high numbers regardless of the changes to the student visa system**

**Pam Gosal**

Parliament to India.

Our trip was based in Delhi, and the purpose of the trip was to help facilitate connections between the FinTech sectors in Scotland and India. Both Scotland and India have world-leading, rapidly growing FinTech sectors and each country has much to learn from the other side to continue this rapid growth.

We also had the opportunity to meet with cultural organisations and discuss possible opportunities in these areas. We also met with numerous senior Indian politicians, including Vice President of India, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, Hardeep Singh Puri, and the Chief Minister of Haryana, Monohar Lal Khattar.

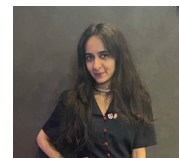
I'm pleased that the trip was a huge success, and I am always hugely impressed whenever I visit India.

This is clearly a country making huge progress in the world, and there is an almost palpable ambition – across everyone we met with - to continue to drive forward through innovation.



A ride on the Delhi Metro left the Scottish delegation impressed.

*Jetal Zala is an alumnus of University of St Andrews and works as an accounts specialist at JP Morgan Chase in Edinburgh. She is also the director and CEO of Use and Grow which makes sustainable pencils and the director and owner of Hyderabad Paradise Restaurant in Edinburgh. At NISAU, she heads the Scotland division.*



**Experience a symphony of flavors at Colonel Saab.**  
FROM STREET FOOD DELIGHTS TO ROYAL KITCHEN TREASURES.  
**EXCLUSIVE OFFER**  
USE THE CODE **CS10** TO RECEIVE A **10%\*** DISCOUNT  
ON A LA CARTE OR TASTING MENU  
**RESERVE NOW**

\*TERMS & CONDITIONS APPLY: OFFER VALID FOR PRE-BOOKINGS ONLY | PROMOTION ENDS ON 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024 | OFFER APPLICABLE FOR LUNCHES AND EARLY DINNERS.

# London: A living bridge to a successful future

As the gateway to the UK for the rest of the world, it is no surprise that London remains the most popular destination for international students coming to the UK to study. Today, 40 per cent of all first-year students coming to study in London are from overseas and the benefits they bring stretch way beyond the capital. According to recent analysis by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), just one year's cohort of international students in London bring in a net economic impact of £9.59 billion and their presence adds to the vibrancy of campus life, enhances the learning environment for British students through fresh ideas and perspectives, and provides a unique source of talent to go on to power the nation's businesses and public services. A significant share of the UK's growing international student population now comes from India. According to the UK Home Office, visas issued to Indian students increased by 102 per cent in the 12 months between September 2020 and 2021, with over 90,000 visas issued by the end of that period. Many of these Indian students are choosing to come to London. With over 50 world-class higher education institutions, the accolade of being the world's best student city, and a thriving start-up scene for budding entrepreneurs, Indian students are increasingly seeing in London the opportunity to be part of a dynamic and forward-thinking innovation ecosystem – facilitated by the Graduate Route, which allows international students the opportunity to stay in the UK after graduation to kickstart their professional careers. As a result, many London universities have become living bridges for talented, young Indians to receive a first-rate higher education before taking their talents into the UK workforce or, indeed, out into wider world. At London Higher, we remain committed to London's higher education sector retaining this international feel – not just for the immediate benefits it brings to our institutions, but also for our economy,



Dr Diana Beech is the Chief Executive Officer of London Higher. She is responsible for leading the organisation's aims and objectives, being a voice for London's universities and higher education colleges. Diana has previously worked in government as a policy adviser to three Ministers of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation. Prior to this she was the first Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI).

It is our mission to show all international students that they are welcome here

our 'soft power' credentials and our ability to act as 'force for good' around the world.

We were the first sector body to publish the first regional International Education Strategy, we continue to explore what we could be doing better for international students while they are studying in London, and we are committed to working collaboratively with sector partners to prevent drastic changes to the Graduate Route. Above all, it is our mission to show all international students – whether from India or elsewhere – that they are welcome here and that London will always be a living bridge to a successful future.



The University College London



**NISAU-ETS gave away \$75,000 worth of scholarships to Indian students to pursue their education in the UK in 2023-24.**

**Now the ETS UK INDIA TOEFL**

**Scholarship plans to expand its offerings in 2024-25, reaffirming its commitment to broadening student support and enhancing educational opportunities.**



# Bridging Dreams and Education: The Transformative Impact of the NISAU ETS Scholarship

## Sandy Bhargal and Sachin Jain

In the realm of academic pursuit, Vinayak Ashok Modi's journey at Imperial College London stands out, driven by a scholarship that made all the difference. He says, "The scholarship was crucial, especially for covering the accommodation fee, significantly impacting my studies." His experience, from collaborative research with NTU, Singapore, to ambitions in India's technology sector, reflects the scholarship's role in enabling students' aspirations. This initiative, a partnership between ETS TOEFL and NISAU, supports students like Vinayak, providing them with the necessary financial aid to pursue education in the UK.

A joint effort by ETS TOEFL and the National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU), the scholarship aims to support 25 deserving students. This scholarship is a part of the India@75, ETS@75, and India-UK ties celebrations and support Indian scholars who aspire to pursue their undergraduate or postgraduate studies at a UK university. The total value of the scholarships is US\$75,000 (approx. INR 60 lacs), and each selected candidate receives a scholarship worth INR 2,40,000. The scholarships are intended to provide financial support for various college expenses, including but not limited to tuition, books, housing deposits, and transportation. Vinayak's testimonial sheds light on the scholarship's profound impact. He overcame challenges in the application process, including navigating financial constraints. The financial support provided through the scholarship also enabled him to manage living expenses and concentrate on his studies, illustrating the scholarship's role not just in facilitating education but in nurturing future innovators. The TOEFL iBT test, renowned for its rigorous assessment of language



Sandy Bhargal is the Executive Director of Global Strategy and Growth at ETS International, UK.



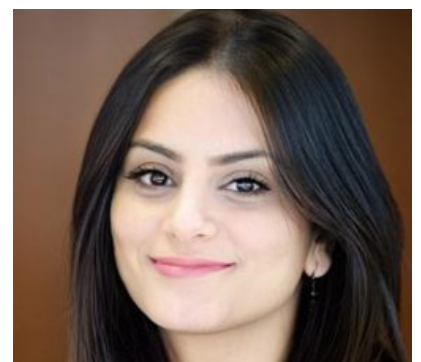
Sachin Jain is the Country Manager, ETS India & South Asia.

proficiency, underscores the scholarship's emphasis on quality. With a combination of AI and human oversight, the TOEFL test ensures a fair assessment of test takers so that they are well-equipped for the demands of a UK academic environment. Similarly, Rahil Manish Shah, another beneficiary enrolled in media studies at Loughborough University, highlighted that the grant allowed him to invest in his passion for social causes, emphasizing the scholarship's capacity to adapt to diverse academic pursuits. The ETS India - NISAU Scholarship exemplifies the transformative power of education. By providing financial support, championing quality, and facilitating international collaboration, it stands as a beacon of hope for students across borders, paving the way for a brighter, more interconnected future.



I'm delighted that our collaboration with ETS helped secure funds for Indian students to pursue their dream study in the UK. We know one of the biggest impediments is the financial cost and this initiative helped some extremely talented and deserving students mitigate that. I was really impressed with the quality of applications and the desire to use their education for good. I'm thrilled that ETS has come on board to extend support to students this year too.

Sanam Arora, Chairperson, NISAU



# Congratulations!

To the 10 winners of the  
UK INDIA TOEFL Scholarship!

## Who have made it to the top UK universities.



For more details on the  
UK INDIA TOEFL Scholarship 2024

[www.etsindia.org/scholarship/](http://www.etsindia.org/scholarship/)

Check for Updates at the ETS INDIA SCHOLARSHIPS HUB

# The TOEFL iBT® test

## *An even better experience*



- **Accepted 100% in UK universities.**
- **TOEFL test is less than 2 hours.**
- **Get official scores as early as 4 days.**
- **TOEFL test assessed by human raters and AI.**

Show universities you're prepared for success with the TOEFL iBT® test—the world's most reliable English-language test for study work.

### TEST YOUR WAY

One trusted test. Two convenient ways to take it. It's your test, your choice.



**TOEFL iBT**  
**At a Test Center**



**Register Today!**



**TOEFL iBT**  
**Home Edition**

**Take the TOEFL test today**

**ETS TOEFL iBT**

**India Contact Centre**

E-Mail : TOEFLSupport4India@ets.org

Tel: 1800-123-9418 [8AM to 8PM IST] 7 days a week including holidays



# India continues to be incredibly important: ETS

ETS, the global, private educational research, assessment and measurement organization, is often best known for its tests like TOEFL iBT. **Anu Chaudhary** speaks to **Rohit Sharma**, ETS's SVP of Global Higher Education & Workskills.

**Anu Chaudhary: What are some of the recent updates into the flagship assessment as well as ETS's offerings beyond the English-language testing sector?**

**Rohit Sharma:** For the past several years, ETS has been working hard to enhance the TOEFL iBT test that test takers and institutions around the world have come to know and rely on as the most widely accepted measure of English-language proficiency for study abroad aspirants. Just last year, we reduced the test to less than two hours, and at that time, we also reemphasized our commitment to continuously identifying ways to improve learners' experience with the test. This month, we did just that with the launch of TOEFL TestReady, a comprehensive test prep and personalized insights portal for English-language learners planning to study or work abroad. Not only was it designed for test takers, but it was designed with them based on their feedback. Better yet, the insights and recommendations provided to learners within the portal help them close their unique skills gaps; perform better on test day; and feel more confident and prepared. It's only the beginning of how we'll continue to cater to learners' needs when it comes to test preparation, and we look forward to sharing more in the months ahead.

**AC: Are there any recent trends you've noticed among TOEFL test takers?**

**RS:** Regarding trends, one thing we've identified is an increasing interest in the UK as a study destination as evidenced by TOEFL iBT score report data. While there are some recent changes that have been announced by the UK government, we saw a 50% increase in TOEFL test takers sending



Rohit Sharma

their score reports to the U.K. between 2017-2022. Of course, the UK has remained in the top 3 destinations for Indian test takers seeking to go abroad over the last few years as well. This is promising and likely a result of several key initiatives in the UK which make it easier and more inviting for international students to study in country.

**AC: What are some key initiatives ETS has undertaken recently in India?**

**RS:** India continues to be incredibly important to ETS. The sheer size of this market means there are immense opportunities to help learners at various stages of their educational

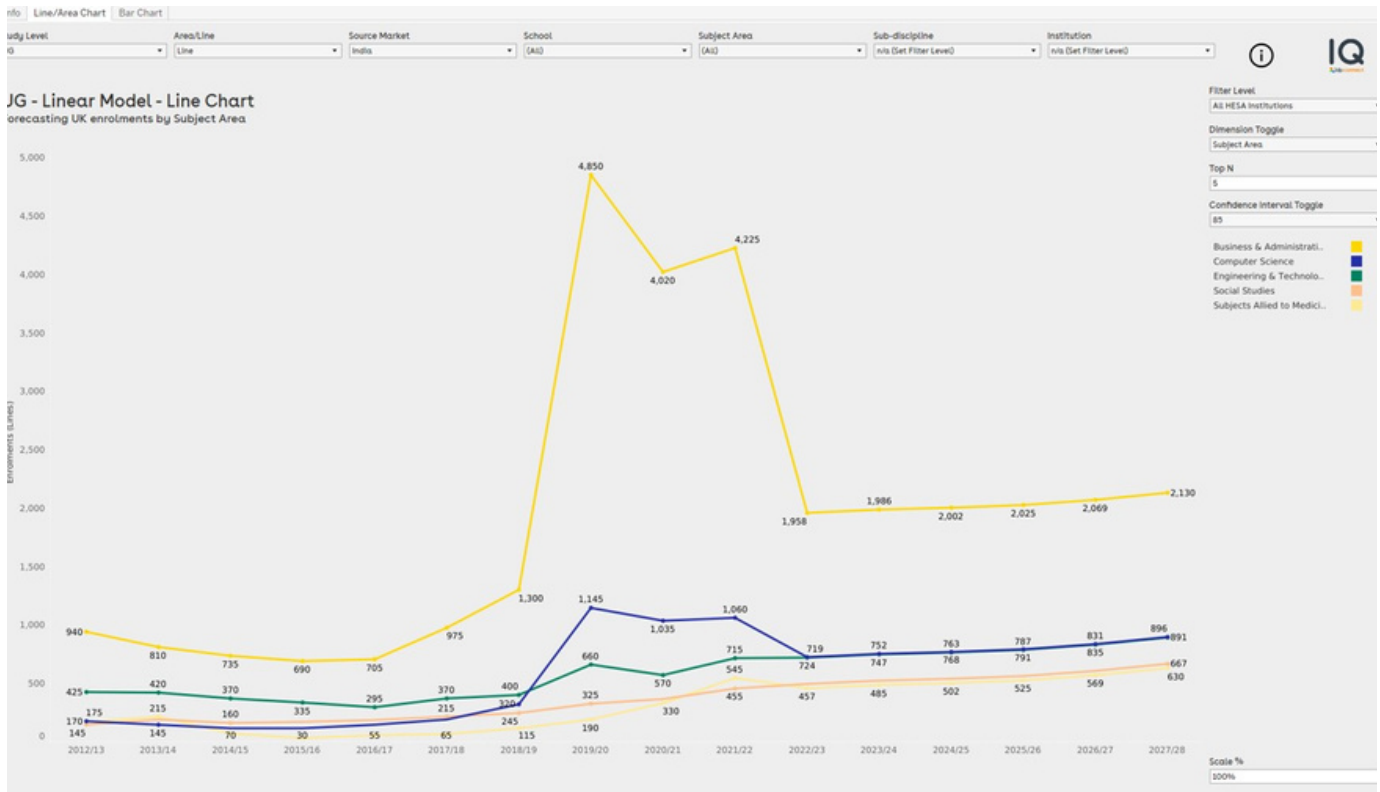
journeys – from young learners to college-bound. We're thrilled to officially mark one year of our work with the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to support India's first national assessment regulator, PARAKH, which aims to build quality assessments to better measure and increase knowledge and skill acquisition across India. This capitalizes on ETS's expertise in educational measurement and large-scale assessment services, and we're honored to collaborate on such an important initiative. On a related note, we also announced last year a five-year initiative with the Government of Andhra Pradesh to provide customized English assessments to students in the state's government schools from Class 3 to 10 through our TOEFL Young Student Series assessments. These examples are just a couple of proof points of ETS's capabilities in helping governments, businesses and associations worldwide to build and assess skills, and ultimately make a positive impact on overcoming societal challenges and meeting their unique goals. We look forward to continuing this work and showcasing examples of how ETS is doing this on the global scale in the year ahead.

*Anu Chaudhary is an alumna of Middlesex University where she studied Journalism and Media Studies.*



*She has studied, lived and worked in London, Dubai and India and has worked across Travel, Hospitality, Media and Education.*

# The focus on India has never been more intense



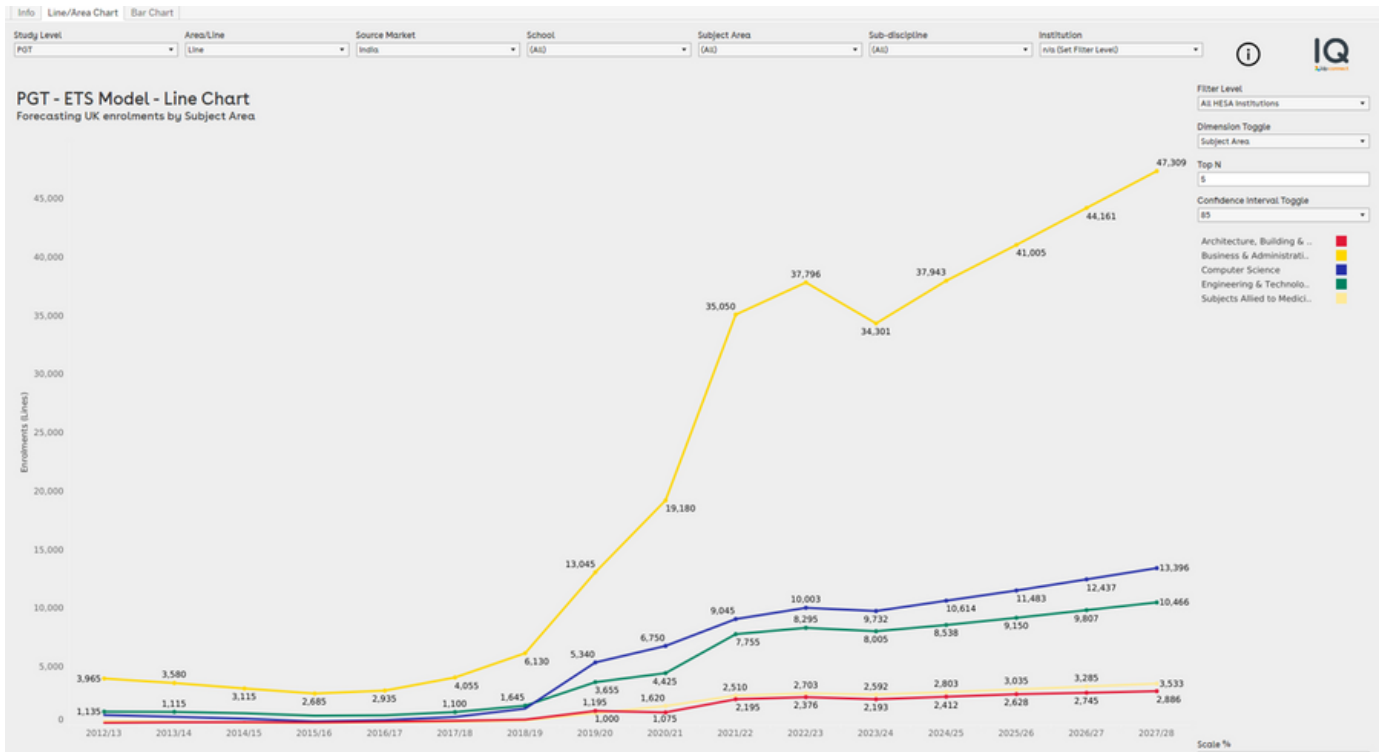
Predicted UG growth from India by top five subject areas



**Simon Emmett** leads the strategic direction and operational delivery of IDP Connect, the business-to-business division of global education company and ASX 100 listed organization, IDP Education. Sitting on the Global Leadership Team for IDP Education, Simon leads the direction of strategic partnerships and government relations for IDP across Europe, North America, and Asia Pacific. With more than 20 years of experience in the Higher Education sector, Simon is responsible for the delivery of IDP's client-facing data and insight, marketing and recruitment solutions for higher education clients across the world. In addition, Simon leads student facing research websites and apps including The Complete University Guide and Whatuni.

The partnerships teams at IDP Connect spend a high proportion of time meeting with universities and colleges in the UK about their strategic recruitment priorities. We get to see what's happening across the whole sector – at all types of institutions in all corners of the country. Regardless of where the university is, their ranking or portfolio, there's one market all our partners want to talk about – and that market is India. The focus on this diverse and complex market has never been more intense – so we're dusting off our crystal ball (or rather using our

unique insights and data analysis) to look at what the indicators are around subject demand from India, and what institutions can do about it. IDP has a team of dedicated data analysts and scientists who use a wide-range of proprietary and secondary data sources to offer sector-leading consultancy for universities across the world. One of the programmes of work that the team has developed is called Global Flows Modelling. Global Flows Modelling uses International Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data, and external data sets such as



Predicted PG growth from India by top five subject areas

IMF data and country population data, along with machine learning algorithms, to predict what country-level student flows will look like into the future, as well as subject level, sub-discipline level and study level student flows. There are many segments of this work that our partners find helpful but the one we receive the most feedback on is predicting what demand for the UK will look like from a country level. Our Global Flows Modelling does that.

**PREDICTING GROWTH AREAS**

Here, we want to share two views of the data. The first is predicted growth from India at Undergraduate (UG) level and the second is predicted growth from India at Postgraduate (PG) level. We've cut it by the top five subject areas as Image One (UG) and Image Two (PG) below display. While some of these subjects are not surprising, there are others that might cause universities to think differently about what they promote in India. Is your institution positioned to take advantage of a growing demand for UK Social Sciences, for example, and are your marketing messages geared towards the needs of Indian students?

**HOW TO USE THE DATA**

One way to think about how to use this data is to think of yourself going to

**International education is a game of positioning, portfolio, price and promotion**

India with one suitcase. In that suitcase, alongside your sunscreen and flip-flops, you've got to fit in the courses that will 'sell' in that market. You might work at a specialist institution that only offers 'Engineering' but you might work at a comprehensive university that offers 500+ PG courses and 700+ UG courses. You can't fit them all in the case – so, what's coming with you and what's staying behind? An additional consideration here is to think about what parts of India you and your suitcase are heading to – what might be popular in South India may not be popular in the North. Here are three things to think about when you're packing that case:

1. Does the portfolio your university offers match the future demand of Indian students? Yes? Great – fold that up and get it in a packing cube.



Emmett at the launch of Achievers Honours in British Parliament.

2. Do you know which cities in India are most aligned demand-wise to that portfolio? No? There are sources that can help you – IDP's Core Partners have access to our tool called IQ Demand, which allows you at-a-glance visualisation of what subjects are most searched for at city level. Your own data is also a great source of this information – can you see where enrolments in previous cycles have come from at city level? With this analysis done, get that in the case.
3. Make sure you've told people you are coming. What digital marketing or pre-work have you done so that people know you and your bag are on your way to market?

Policy changes notwithstanding, India is a burgeoning market with so much opportunity for you to take advantage of. This is a game of positioning, portfolio, price, and promotion.

# Celebrating mobility between India and the UK

India is a major player in the world's economy and is projected to be the third largest by 2035, so opportunities for continued collaboration between the two countries remain as important as ever.

Promoting the unique strengths of education and skills systems is beneficial to both countries, helping ensure a diverse and balanced workforce worldwide while supporting the enrichment of opportunity in both nations.

Mobility is part of managed migration, ensuring that countries can secure public confidence in both temporary and permanent immigration, by implementing measures such as verifying the credentials and qualifications of those who aim to study or work abroad.

With STEM subjects a major focus in India and the UK's ability to nurture professions that thrive on creativity, there's an environment through mobility where different educational backgrounds complement each other, meaning students get the best of both worlds.

Students from India benefit from the UK's renowned universities and research facilities, financial institutions, arts and humanities.

Students from Britain can increasingly access India's diverse offering, which includes globally leading sectors like IT and AI.

Traditionally, Indian students have had to travel to the UK to get a British education.

But thanks to recent liberalisation and reform of branch campus regulations by the Indian federal government, in future, UK universities will be able to establish operations and enrol students from across India.

It's worth noting that India is home to one of the world's largest universities – the University of Mumbai – with over 700,000 students enrolled on courses including health, IT and law.

Recognising the contributions of the



Professor Tom Bewick, FRSA is the chief executive of Ecctis—a UK-based internationally trusted provider of solutions and services in international education, training, and skills, and in the development and recognition of globally portable qualifications with a global network and client base spanning 62 countries, across five continents. Previously Prof Bewick was the chief executive of the Federation of Awarding Bodies. He is a Visiting Professor in Skills and Workforce Policy at Staffordshire University.

---

**The UK and Indian governments have signed a an MOU on mutual recognition of qualifications, and this was facilitated by UK ENIC.**

---

Indian diaspora in the UK is important, particularly in trade, education, innovation and mutual understanding. It contributes to the Living Bridge between the nations, promoting the idea there are no limits on human potential, in the context of managed migration.

Joint research and academic programmes, student exchange, enhancing shared knowledge, understanding, and collaborating to help address global challenges, are all helping to strengthen diplomatic ties between the UK and India.

Organisations like the National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) play a crucial role in embracing diversity in education, helping to build a more interconnected, inclusive and prosperous future for both countries.

My company, on behalf of the UK Government, manages the UK National Information Centre (UK ENIC) for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills. The UK and Indian governments have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on mutual recognition of qualifications, and this was facilitated by UK ENIC.

However, there's still more to explore and achieve together – such as work around the recognition of online learning in India - and I for one are particularly excited about what the future holds.





British Deputy High Commissioner to Hyderabad, Gareth Wynn Owen delivering the opening address at the Achievers Dialogues. (Right) An interactive discussion with students at the Sarojini Academy, Hyderabad on how sports and education brings the two nations together.

# Connecting Minds, Inspiring Futures

The India-UK Achievers' Dialogue fosters intellectual exchange, cultural understanding, and socio-economic partnerships between India and the United Kingdom

## Dr Aishwarya Mishra and Jyoti Mangal

The India-UK Achievers' Dialogue was born out of two key needs: to spread the transformative stories of our Achievers throughout India and to weave a tale of inspiration and encouragement for future generations of internationally mobile students looking towards the UK as their preferred study destination. In 2023, it was divided into eight engaging sessions in five cities across India from April to August, each session providing a plethora of information and inspiration to the youth of India.

### UNVEILING THE DIALOGUES IN NEW DELHI

**April 20-21:** The journey commenced in the cultural and political heart of India, where the two inaugural sessions at the British Council office, in New Delhi set the tone for the entire program. The events were set under two themes "Building a dream career" and "Carving my own niche" which also then continued across other locations. Our expert panel included Advocate Shreeyash Lalit, Academic Surbhi Bhandari, Paediatrician Beena

Koshy, Policymaker Urvashi Prasad, and Economist Mitali Nikore among others, and shared their insights on international education and overcoming adversity with innovation and entrepreneurship. NISAU and ETS also announced the launch of their inaugural \$75000 worth of scholarships for aspiring students.

### NURTURING ACADEMIC AND ATHLETIC EXCELLENCE IN CHENNAI

**August 17:** Chennai, known for its multidisciplinary prowess, hosted a panel consisting of Commonwealth and Asian Games medallist Sourav Ghoshal, Economist Anand Srinivasan, Brain Imaging researcher Jyoti Mangal and moderated by British Council South India Director Janaka Pushpanathan. The ensuing interactive discussions emphasized the significance of quality of education, educational collaborations, and student exchanges. The dialogues in Chennai aimed to create a roadmap for fostering partnerships between educational institutions in India and the UK.

### WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE CAPITAL

**August 19:** The team was back in the political heart of India with an all-

women India UK achievers panel comprising Journalist Marya Shakil, Policymaker Urvashi Prasad, and Economist Mitali Nikore moderated by NISAU Chairperson Sanam Arora. This highly interactive session attracted a large female audience of prospective students, who contributed to the discussions around women's empowerment and how to tackle and address additional challenges faced by women. The event also featured a keynote from Alison Barrett, Director of the British Council India.

### WEAVING STEM INTO THE CULTURAL TAPESTRY OF KOLKATA

**August 21:** The journey continued to Kolkata, a city steeped in history and cultural richness. The dialogues here focused on science and innovation. The panel had two UK university alumni Aishwarya Mishra, a Cancer and Drug Delivery Scientist and Vijaya Priyadarshini, a Cancer Trials Specialist and was moderated by Debanjan Chakraborti, Director of British Council East India. They discussed STEM education and research with emphasis on interdisciplinarity offered by UK education, the significance of collaborations, and highlighting the opportunities available to >>



Achievers Dialogues at the Film City in Mumbai focussed on cross-cultural exchanges in journalism and media production. (Right) The capital New Delhi saw a discussion on the synergies in the justice system in India and the UK.

international students through the British Council, British Universities, and the governments of both countries.

### SHINING ON THE SILVER SCREEN IN MUMBAI

**August 23:** Moving to the bustling metropolis of Mumbai next, the focus shifted to political, journalistic, and cultural educational exchanges between India and the UK.

Distinguished speakers included two achievers: Meghna Ghai Puri (President, Whistling Woods International) and Chaitanya Marpakwar (Journalist) and actor Shashank Arora while Sanam Arora moderated the panel.

It engaged in discussions on global challenges, sustainability, and the role of UK education in shaping their career. The dialogues that happened in the sprawling green film city in Mumbai underscored the importance of cross-cultural understanding in forging stronger ties between the two nations. The panel discussion followed an address by Rashi Jain, Director of British Council West India.

### THE NEW TECH AND EDUCATION REVOLUTION IN HYDERABAD

**August 26:** In the new tech and sporting hub of India, the dialogue program was conducted across two panels: Education and Innovation and Sports and Resilience. The panels were kicked off with keynotes by the Deputy High Commissioner of Hyderabad, Gareth Wynn Owen and British Council Director of Education Ritika Chandra Parruck.

The Education and Innovation panel saw Consultant Ophthalmologist

Anthony Vipin Das and Educator Vignesh Krishnan joined by Sustainability Lead Pratyusha Parakala and Drug Delivery Researcher Aishwarya Mishra, who shared their experiences in fostering advancements in education, science, sustainability, and entrepreneurship.

The Sports and Resilience panel saw an inspiring and candid conversation with the Former Captain of the Indian Women's Cricket team Mithali Raj who took the audience through her amazing journey from the streets of Hyderabad to the helm of Indian cricket. It also put into perspective the amazing sports infrastructure and the sports-loving youth in the city.

### THE SEAT OF THE INDIAN JUSTICE SYSTEM IN NEW DELHI

**August 28:** On our last stop, the dialogues celebrated the bridge between the oldest and the largest democracy through the perspectives of the sentinels of the democracy.

The panel involved Former Judge of the Supreme Court of India Indira Banerjee, Supreme Court of India Advocate Karuna Nundy, Barrister Chintan Chandrachud and was moderated by Advocate Tanvi Dubey.

The panellists discussed the different aspects of how law and justice are delivered across the two countries and contrasted the experiences of experiencing, delivering, and studying the justice system.

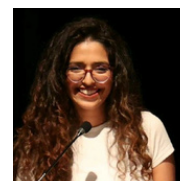
The India-UK Achievers' Dialogue Program, as it traversed through Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Chennai, emerged as a testament to the UK's biggest export: world-class education with the Achievers as its

torchbearers and highlighted the shared values, aspirations, and potential for collaboration between India and the United Kingdom. The dialogues will undoubtedly serve as a foundation for future leaders looking to pursue education in the UK.

*Dr. Aishwarya Mishra is the General Secretary and Director, NISAU and an award-winning early career researcher in cancer therapy and drug delivery imaging at King's College London where he also received his PhD in Medical Imaging for his work on cancer nanomedicines. In the wider scientific community, he is heavily involved in public engagement and scientific societies including Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), European Society of Molecular Imaging (ESMI) and Controlled Release Society (CRS).*



*Jyoti Mangal is the Head of Research at NISAU and a PhD researcher at Centre for Doctoral Training in Smart Medical Imaging (SMI-CDT) at King's College London where she is working on developing advanced high-resolution techniques for using brain MRI with a special focus on epilepsy. She is well known for her STEM public engagement work with kids from varied backgrounds. Jyoti has a bachelor's and master's degree in physics from Delhi University and IIT Delhi respectively.*



# Dreams, debt, degree and a desired job

The dreams of an international education can land many aspirational Indian students in debt before they can secure that coveted degree. UK Universities say they are here to help

## Shaurya Dev

It all starts with a dream. The dream of studying in the prestigious universities of the UK captures the imagination of thousands of young Indian students every year. Over 1.4 thousand Indian students flew to the UK last year while thousands more dreamt but couldn't do so as studying abroad doesn't come easy. It takes months of collective effort of the student and their family, besides the financial, emotional, and physical constraints, to make these dreams a reality. Consequently, these students carry the aspirations of their family, teachers, friends and sometimes the whole village or town. Every student has an incredible journey that brings them to the UK.

"I am a student of English literature, so the UK is a holy grail for me, and it also provides a large variety of courses, focusing on different things that India or even the USA doesn't offer," mentions Harsha Singh, a final year undergraduate student of English Honours from the Sri Venkateswara College. Harsha now awaits to hear back from British universities regarding his master's applications, which have been quite taxing. From completing extensive application forms and obtaining recommendation letters to taking the IELTS exam and enhancing his CV through internships, he managed all this alongside handling his final exams and assignments. Like Harsha, thousands of students balance multiple responsibilities during the application stage, all in the hope of securing a spot in their dream universities. Harsha's father Prof. Abhay Prasad Singh, a reputed academic at Delhi University, believes that there is great academic scholarship in many different parts of the world, however, the success of the universities in the UK lies in their truly cosmopolitan and global nature. To



Young Indians look at UK as a dream destination for studies and jumpstart to a career.



Dr. Sionade Robinson, City, University of London

their credit, he added, these universities have created a culturally rich environment where students from around the world feel comfortable and find the space to interact, engage and learn beyond the classroom, creating truly global citizens. As an academic, he is keen for his son to get this exposure, but as a parent, he finds the cost of education in the UK worrying. A great challenge that hinders students is the financial strain that studying abroad can impose on their families. Darpan Bhalla, a student aspiring to >>



Vikki Wilson, University of York



Laura Mitford, Newcastle University



Janie Kingsley, University of Portsmouth

pursue a postgraduate degree in Sociology in the UK, is attracted by the prospect of exploring different cultures and networking with the brightest minds from around the world. However, funding his education abroad remains a concern.

“Being able to afford my studies in the UK won't be possible without a student loan,” he said. “I am actively looking to secure some amount of financial grants through scholarships and pay for the rest through a student loan.” This high cost of studying abroad deters many low-income families from sending their children and those who do send their children hope for a good return on investment, that is high-paying job opportunities and a better life after their degrees.

#### A HELPING HAND

“Investing in Indian students in the UK is an investment in the future. By facilitating their academic journey, SBI UK empowers them to become tomorrow's leaders, strengthening both India and the UK,” says Sudhir Sharma,

Regional Head (UK), State Bank of India and CEO, SBI (UK) adding that SBI offers Namaste UK accounts for Indian students moving to the UK.

Universities across the UK are offering scholarships to international students including Indians to undertake postgraduate courses. “Within St Leonard's Postgraduate College scholarship, there is a Global Widening Participation scheme which covers full tuition fees for any PGT programme and maintenance incl housing and stipend of £18,000,” says Candice Alrich, Regional Manager - South Asia, Middle East and Africa at University of St. Andrews.

The focus on employability skills and placement opportunities is also high. “We are working closely with aspirational employers to co-design







and co-deliver modules targeting specific skills sets in demand in global employment markets. Such work is, in some ways, pioneering a new convergence of study and work experience and offering our students a unique and valuable experience which helps accelerate their immersion into the global talent pool,” says Dr Sionade Robinson - Vice President (Enterprise, Engagement and Employability) at City, University of London.

“The University of Portsmouth is the only UK university to offer a 3 year course with 4th year placement. As well as being able to take a traditional sandwich placement before third year on most of our undergraduate degrees, students can now take a work placement after their final year. We call courses with this placement option



# Learning without Limits

Discover our range of products to help further education and careers.

-  **University Partnerships**
-  **Education Services**
-  **Oxford Direct**
-  **Oxford International Digital Institute (OIDI)**
-  **English Language**
-  **Career Colleges**

To find out more, visit:  
[oxfordinternational.com](https://oxfordinternational.com)  
[oidigitalinstitute.com](https://oidigitalinstitute.com)

Connected Degrees,” says Jains Kingsley, Director, Global at University of Portsmouth.

“All students can participate in the award-winning York Strengths programme, which helps students identify strengths and stand out to employers. They can also receive tailored guidance from a dedicated International Careers Officer who can advise on seeking employment in the UK and back home, says Vikki Wilson, International Recruitment Manager (South and Southeast Asia) at the University of York, where 93% of international graduates enter work or further study within 15 months of graduating. “Our ambition over the next few years is to develop a sustainable model for partnership development that will enhance staff and student mobility across India,” says Laura Mitford Senior International Recruitment Manager, South and Southeast Asia International Office at Newcastle University. “This ambition is underpinned by the bilateral relationship between the countries, and it helps us to continue providing Indian students with networking opportunities, access to advanced facilities, and exposure to diverse perspectives,” she adds.

Recruitment consultants recommend support services like NISAU to the incoming students. “We enrol over 5,000 Indian students at their dream universities each year. It is a great reassurance to know that those bound for the UK will have such a strong community of fellow Indian students and alumni to support them, both professionally and personally, and also, protect their interests. At our pre-departure briefings we always encourage new students to engage with the NISAU network to get even more out of their time in the UK,” says Adam Pettit, Director of UK Partnerships at AECC. Data released by the UK Home Office shows that Indian students represent 43% of all post-study graduate visas, which remains an important factor that keeps the UK a lucrative option for students. However, if the British government were to review this route unfavourably, several students might choose to study in other countries



Sudhir Sharma, Regional Head (UK), SBI



Harsha Singh



Darpan Bhalla

instead of the UK, which will miss out on the valuable contributions of some of the brightest minds to the British economy. While this remains a question for the future, this year the UK continues to be a dream destination for thousands of students who seek their dream degrees and universities and other stakeholders are ensuring to make his journey as smooth and beneficial as possible.

Shaurya Dev is an alumnus of London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) 2023, and is a member of NISAU.



He is currently working in Digital Media and Communication in Mumbai, and is working on a research paper on Digital Diplomacy at the Department of International Relations, LSE.

## WINNERS OF THE STUDENT WHEN I FIRST CAME TO THE UK CONTEST!

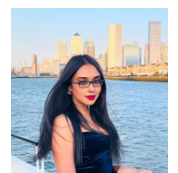
*When I First Came to The UK  
In the UK I arrived, on wings of delay,  
Frozen whispers, a scared girl's ballet.  
Airport chaos, a wine bottle in hand,  
Journeying alone, in a foreign land.  
A stranger's touch, a comforting grace,  
Guiding me through this uncertain space.  
Tears and laughter, a dance intertwined,  
My parents' bravery, in every step defined.  
Struggle today, my father proclaimed,  
Fruits may linger, but dreams remain.  
From that scared girl, emerged with pride,  
A story of resilience, in every stride.*

**Priyam Suri,**  
**University of Bristol**



*When I first came to the UK  
Gallant and spirited  
as could be,  
I knew not, what lay beyond  
What trials and tribulations, there might be.  
My heart was set,  
my mind was bent  
To thaw my spirit and my resolve  
To achieve what few,  
could only dream  
To attain the highest pinnacle, of my prodigious dreams;  
For back at home, in a land over-shore  
In the glistening vales, of teeming Deccan streets  
My dotting parents, with generations of burdens and asperities  
Ploughed on by, with nothing but a glorious smile.  
Thus, it is for them, that I will succeed.*

**Dipika GokulNath,**  
**University of East London**



# UK-Jharkhand Chevening Partnership Will Transform Lives of Marginalised Youth

**Ashraf Nehal**

Jharkhand, located in eastern India, is home to a substantial population of marginalised communities including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and religious minorities. For centuries, talented youth from these disadvantaged sections faced immense hardships and systemic barriers that deprived them of access to higher education, let alone opportunities to study overseas which remained an impossible dream. The legendary tribal freedom fighter, Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda, was the first exception, who managed to break through these obstacles and achieve the feat of pursuing international education. In a historic move, the Government of Jharkhand in partnership with the United Kingdom, has taken pioneering steps to tackle this injustice and expand access to international education for marginalised communities, through the launch of the Chevening Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Scholarships. British High Commissioner to India, Alex Ellis and Chief Minister Hemant Soren were signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding that established this scholarship programme. Through this path-breaking programme, each year up to five students from disadvantaged SC, ST, OBC and minority backgrounds in Jharkhand will receive fully-funded scholarships to pursue a one-year Master's degree at a leading university in the United Kingdom. The first cohort was selected in 2023, which significantly expanded the UK's extensive Chevening scholarship programme in India. "This scholarship represents a historic opportunity for minorities and marginalised youth from our state. It



British High Commissioner to India, Alex Ellis and then Chief Minister Hemant Soren signed an MoU to establish the scholarship programme.

reflects Jharkhand's commitment to inclusive development by making international education accessible to all talented youth, especially those from disadvantaged communities," said Hafizul Hasan, Minister for Minority Welfare, Jharkhand.

In its very first year, 2021-22, six students from Jharkhand received the scholarship to study impactful courses like International Commercial Law, Molecular Biology, Biotechnology and Computer Science at British universities.

Hitesh Kumar Mahawar is grateful for the opportunity to complete an MPhil in Engineering for Sustainable Development at the University of Cambridge. "Studying where India's first Prime Minister once did was surreal. The visionary approach of the Jharkhand government in establishing such scholarships has empowered me to contribute meaningfully to India's Sustainable Development goals," he said.

For Zeeshan Ahmad, a law student at SOAS, the scholarship made "LLM pursuit at SOAS a reality, breaking

barriers to quality education". "This initiative by the Government of Jharkhand reflects a commitment to social justice, echoing the vision of leaders like Jaipal Singh Munda," he added.

Remarkably, in 2022-23, the number of scholarships increased over three-fold to 19. The Jharkhand government's strong commitment towards the Chevening programme is reflected in the significant financial allocation made in the state budget annually - Rs. 10 crore in 2021-22 to Rs. 18 crore in 2022-23.

Partner universities expanded to include prestigious institutions like University of Warwick, Queen's University Belfast, University of Sussex and SOAS, and disciplines covered have grown more diverse - ranging from engineering, technology and computer science to business, law, journalism, healthcare, development studies, social sciences and more.

Wider collaboration through the MoU saw the inauguration of a Jharkhand module of the UK-supported Climate Resilience Information System and



## Studying where India's first Prime Minister once did was surreal

Hitesh Kumar Mahawar, student at University of Cambridge

Planning tool to counter climate risks. A business roundtable was also organised between the British High Commissioner and industry captains. Earlier, even the most talented youth from disadvantaged communities in Jharkhand were deprived of overseas education opportunities due to lack of financial resources, information asymmetry and societal attitudes. This pioneering Chevening programme is dismantling those barriers and turning the impossible dream of studying globally into a reality.

Ashraf Nehal is a post-graduate of SOAS, University of London and a columnist who writes on South Asian geopolitics. ■



# Education Loans as Enablers for pursuing Academics Overseas: A Perspective

## Arijit Sanyal

India's long-term growth story is on an upward trajectory with its large, increasingly affluent and aspirational middle-class population expected to continue being the bedrock of the Indian economy. As a result, quality education continues to be the cornerstone for personal growth and aspiration. The benefits of international exposure prompt students to look outward to countries such as the UK, USA, Australia, Canada and Germany to enhance learning. This is owing to the diverse academic options available, as well as better employment opportunities coupled with a higher standard of living. As per the Ministry of External Affairs, there were approximately 1.5 million Indian students pursuing their education overseas as of January 2023.

However, rising fees and ancillary expenses such as travel, accommodation, as well as related costs including the purchase of study equipment are creating a pressing need for parents in both urban and rural areas to explore the option of availing finance to fund their children's education.

According to a RedSeer report released in 2021, it is estimated that 1.8 million Indians will spend US\$ 85 billion on overseas education by 2024.

Since inception, HDFC Credila has played a role in this growth story, having funded over 168,000 Indian students aspiring to pursue their higher education in 4,500+ universities across 61 countries globally.

Availing an education loan from a lender such as HDFC Credila is



Arijit Sanyal is the Managing Director and CEO, HDFC Credila.

According to a RedSeer report released in 2021, it is estimated that 1.8 million Indians will spend US\$ 85 billion on overseas education by 2024

seamless, with a digital application process. The Company has invested time and resources to establish appropriate systems, processes and know-how related to the education sector, and with in-depth domain knowledge, is equipped to provide best-in-class education loan solutions to aspiring students. ■

# Elephant Whisperer: From Photojournalism to Wildlife Conservation



Anand Shinde calms the angry elephant Gajaraj at the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve, the oldest and the largest national park in Maharashtra, India.

## Ruchi Hajela

Gone are the times when growing linearly in a career or sticking to one career path for the most part of your life was the norm. With increasing opportunities and a greater acceptance for pursuing what one likes to do, there are many who switch careers throughout their professional life exploring off beaten paths. One such interesting story is of Mumbai based Anand Shinde, who after spending an illustrious decade in journalism with organisations like Dainik Bhaskar, DNA, Hindustan Times is now famous for being an Elephant Whisperer. Yes, you read that right.

Shinde is someone who through his years of observing and understanding elephant behaviour, is now known for his unique ability to communicate with them.

The pivot came in 2012 when Shinde was transferred by his then employer to the state of Kerala, where the mammal can be found aplenty. During this period, Shinde initiated a photo project for elephants, which brought him closer to observing and analysing their behaviour.

Two years later, Trunk Call – The Wildlife Foundation was formed with the aim of conserving elephants and their habitats. His work has involved understanding and communicating the

needs of baby elephants and those requiring medical intervention, resolving human animal conflict, all aimed towards the preservation of the majestic mammal.

“The alarming statistics reveal that an elephant's life is lost every 15 minutes. At this rate, we are at risk of losing these magnificent creatures in our lifetime,” says Shinde, who presented his research at the International Symposium on Ecology and Health Management of Asiatic Elephants. Trunk Call's commitment to capacity building, raising awareness, and restoring elephant corridors is crucial for both wildlife conservation and mitigating conflicts between humans





Knowledge exchange: Anand Shinde of TrunkCall in deep conversation with Tim Appleton of British Birdwatching Fair.

and elephants. “We’ve successfully handled rogue and wild elephants and safely releasing them back into their natural habitat. Our experience in relocating elephant herds without any accidents and handling them through voice commands help these gentle giants alleviate trauma and stress,” explains Shinde, who even offered fodder support for elephants in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have worked with state governments of Kerala, Maharashtra and Assam to address issues like fodder, flood relief and human-elephant conflicts. Shinde’s expertise in communicating with elephants has been well recognised by government officials of all levels and also international personalities like Tim Appleton MBE the founder of the British Birdwatching Fair, who during his visit to a birding fair in India expressed an interest in meeting Shinde and learning more about his work. “It was fantastic to exchange knowledge and best practices with British experts. Transnational networks like these help us learn from each other and together we can all help in preserving our planet,” says Shinde.

Ruchi Hajela is a freelance writer and researcher based in the UK. She has a post-graduate degree from the London School of Economics. ■



 Pearson | PTE

# English tests, without the stress.

Accepted by 99% of UK universities



## English tests for UK study, work and migration visas.

 **Faster**

Results in 2 business days

 **Fairer**

Removing bias by combining leading experts and responsible AI

 **Simpler**

A computer-based test in a single session

## Do it worry-free!

 Learn more at [pearsonpte.com](https://pearsonpte.com)

# India's Tinkerpreneurs and A Million Aspirations

**Varya Srivastava**

With over fifty percent under the age of thirty-five, India is the land of the young. It is a land of millions of aspirations and untapped potential. This realisation of India's demographic dividend is not new; nor is the quest to harness its possibilities. What is new is the realisation that entrepreneurship might be the way forward. When it comes to addressing challenges of development, economic growth and advancement, education is often identified as the solution to all

problems. From Plato in ancient Greece to modern politicians – all of them have consensus on the deterministic role of education in paving the future. That said, when it comes to actualizing this education, most falter. The powerful example of education that goes beyond tokenism, and that taps into the need of hour comes from NITI Aayog's (Government of India's apex planning body) Atal Innovation Mission. In 2016 the Government of India set up Atal Innovation Mission – India's flagship project of scaling innovation and entrepreneurship across the country. Within this ambitious mission, the Atal Tinkering Labs and Mentor India Programme have worked towards enabling a generation of neoteric innovators through mentorship in Indian schools.

This is the first attempt by any government at this scale in institutionalising mentorship within the education system. As of 2023, ten thousand schools across India have Atal Tinkering Labs that enable mentorship for 7.5 million students across the country.

In theory, the idea is simple – most economic opportunities of the future do not exist today. To prepare the youth of today for an uncertain tomorrow, it is important to help them build foundational skills that will help them navigate ambiguity. In practice, this idea takes shape in the form of a pedagogy that is not focused on rote



Atal Innovation Labs are in state schools across the length and breadth of India. Students are encouraged to think outside the box and let their imagination guide innovation.



learning, examination or standardisation. Instead, it pushes students to identify solutions and come up with commercially viable solutions with the support of their mentors. In the million aspirations that coexist in India today, social mobility is a dominant theme. Educational interventions like the Atal Innovation Mission's Atal Tinkering Labs and Mentor India show us that by thinking out of the box and challenging existing norms and institutions of education, we can re-imagine a future of learning that prioritises the aspirations of the learners.

A system that acts as a

catalyst in transforming a student's life.

*Varya Srivastava is the VP of Product and Government Affairs at Network Capital and leads the company's partnership with NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission to design policy interventions that make mentorship accessible to 10,000+ schools and 7.5 million school students in India. She is a postgraduate student at the University of Oxford and has a degree in Political Science at Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi.*



# Loughborough: Where collaboration fuels innovation



## Dr Kirti Ruikar and Prof. Bala Vaidhyathan

Recognised as one of Britain's leading universities, Loughborough University has been a driving force in aeronautical and automotive engineering for over fifty years. Home to one of only two dedicated aeronautical and automotive engineering departments in the UK, Loughborough has a successful history of delivering high-quality teaching and research informed by strong industry partnerships.

The university's long-standing relationship with Rolls-Royce has led to the creation of the National Centre for Combustion and Aerothermal Technology – a global centre of excellence delivering low-emissions technology, building future talent pipelines and contributing to 2050 net zero targets.

Their collaboration with Caterpillar - the first of its kind in Europe - is accelerating innovative technologies within the off-highway powertrain sector, while control technology developed by the university's



Prof. Bala Vaidhyathan and Dr Kirti Ruikar are Loughborough University's Special Envoys responsible for leading the University's Regional Strategy for India.

researchers has improved vehicle handling for Jaguar Land Rover drivers.

Beyond the UK, Loughborough works closely with several high-profile Indian commercial organisations, including Bajaj Auto, one of the world's largest manufacturers of motorcycles and three-wheeled vehicles.

For several years, the university has welcomed Bajaj Auto employees to Loughborough to study master's degrees in engineering and materials

sciences and technology. Students benefit from Loughborough's cutting-edge facilities and faculty expertise while working on live projects for leading companies such as AMG Mercedes Petronas, McLaren and Toyota.

With a commitment to building global partnerships and a reputation for pioneering education and research, Loughborough continues to lead the way in shaping the future of these industries. ■

# NISAU events are a resounding success



Say Cheers! Farhan Akhtar entralls the crowd at the London School of Economics with his wit and charm.

## Vijaya Priyadarshini

As we now celebrate the Achievers Honours 2024, I must say the past year was marked by unprecedented achievements. The National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) stands proud of its triumphs in empowering young minds and fostering a sense of community and cultural pride. All our events have been a testament to our commitment to placing Indian students at the centre of the bilateral relationship between India and the UK, creating a platform for thought-provoking conversations, and celebrating excellence. We operate transnationally making our events geographically dispersed across India and the United Kingdom.

One of the most humungous tasks, as the Events Head at NISAU, has been the inception and event management of the Achievers Honours. This Achievers



Kavitha Kalvakuntla explaining the Telangana model at the University of Oxford

Showcase aimed to recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of Indian students in the UK and so we held it at a stunning venue, Northumberland Avenue in the heart of London and the iconic Palace of Westminster, with 500 guests including many politicians and industry leaders.

Building on this accomplishment, NISAU expanded its horizons with the introduction of "Achievers Dialogues" in India. These transnational events provided a unique platform for students and alumni to engage with accomplished individuals and establish connections that transcend borders. It was another herculean task considering the geographical reach, spanning across all corners of India, including Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Hyderabad covering a wide range of topics. We wanted to create a comprehensive platform for discussions that cater to diverse interests and sectors.

Organising structured interactions at various locations in the UK is an ongoing part of my role at NISAU. Often this comes with very short deadlines but needs to be done at a large scale. We began this academic year by hosting poet and lyricist Javed Akhtar and veteran actor Shabana Azmi at the House of Commons for the inaugural launch of the India UK Arts Forum in September 2023. This event also celebrated the honorary doctorate bestowed upon Javed Akhtar by SOAS University. Both these legends took the audience on a memorable journey through their life experiences and the cultural evolution of the India-UK partnership.

As the beacon of multifaceted talent in the Indian film industry, Farhan Akhtar engaged in an awe-inspiring talk with the students at the London School of Economics on 23rd October. Farhan discussed a myriad of topics, from economics to AI, leaving an

indelible impression on all with his striking personality and intellect. The evening concluded with the live rendition of legendary Urdu poetry to reciting “Diamond biscuit” and “Tum ho toh”.

In October 2023, we organised The India UK Youth Leadership Conclave, featuring a roundtable conversation with Kavitha Kalvakuntla, Member of Telangana Legislative Council, who emphasised the importance of insightful dialogue and mutual learning. Her talk at the University of Oxford highlighted the Telangana Model as a transformative governance blueprint.

As youth leaders, we were encapsulated by the model where equitable growth and innovation congregate to promote a thriving community.

Earlier in June 2023, we led an India-UK Education Forum that saw Dr. Shashi Tharoor, the chief guest hold discussions with several parliamentarians, HE stakeholders and student leaders.

With the past few months spent organising an even bigger Achievers Honours and the day-long forum with keynotes, panels and breakout sessions, I can say that life at NISAU is always challenging but the results are so worth it. NISAU's events have been a resounding success. Looking ahead, NISAU remains committed to inspiring the youth to drive collective efforts for positive change. The belief that the seeds of transformation must be sown from within underpins our vision for the future.

*Dr Vijaya Priyadarshini is the Vice-President and Head of Events, NISAU. She is a cancer*



*researcher at the Institute of Cancer Research and the Royal Marsden NHS Trust working across multiple clinical trials aimed at finding a definitive cure for different cancer types and enhancing palliative care. She is a dental surgeon by qualification, a researcher by profession and a writer by passion. She is an alumnus of the University of Birmingham, Queen Mary University of London, in the UK and Utkal University in India. ■*



All smiles: Shabana Azmi, Javed Akhtar and Gurinder Chaddha at the UK Parliament.



# Social media can destroy your soul: Farhan Akhtar

Bollywood icon **Farhan Akhtar** speaks to LSE **Professor Mukulika Banerjee** and NISAU Chairperson **Sanam Arora** about how film production has changed, his investments and social media. Some excerpts...

**Sanam Arora:** Talk to us about the economics of filmmaking and how that's changed in India, particularly with the advent of OTT platforms.

**Farhan Akhtar:** I mean in my lifetime itself I remember that when we started with Dil Chahta Hai, we could not borrow money from a bank because banks would not lend money to Film Production houses at all as it was too risky. You could not break-even or just get your investment back so a lot of the money that was borrowed including that to make a film was through personal money lenders such as those who would be interested in film or rich people who would produce and put money into films so that they could take family photos on set but the money that they lent was at an interest

I invest in people. For me, the exciting thing is to find a new writer, find a new director, find someone new to cast and to see that grow is amazing.

rate of anywhere between 18% to 24% It took the late 2000s with a certain degree of a corporate structure coming in with the industry status being

provided to films that banks eventually started lending money to films, so now it's easier. Of course, that's changed now with OTT. All these things pose their own set of challenges of how to make a business or deal with the business but it's an evolving landscape constantly because the way film is consumed, or the way content is consumed is constantly changing.

**Mukulika Banerjee:** Is this a new thing that a lot of actors have done with producing their own films, or has this been the case in cinema all along?

**FA:** It is a recent thing, happened over the last 10 to 12 years, and that really has happened because it's become very difficult to pay the actors the fee that



No topic off the table: Farhan Akhtar speaks candidly about film production, social media, sibling rivalry and toxic masculinity at the London School of Economics.



**As an actor, nothing compares to Bhag Milkha Bhag as a challenge. That was a stellar performance.**

they want. So, it makes more sense for them to be a partner in the profit of the film. If I had to break it down, if you're spending £100 on making a film and if out of that you had to give £70 to the actor and just make your film in £30, it's impossible to make, right? So, that's it, there's no logic to it.

So, you spend £100 on the film and you tell the actor that when it makes money, you take 50% of the profit, but let's not burden the making of the film because that'll break the film.

Inadvertently, what happened was the actors realized it was better to also become producers.

**SA: There's this recent trend of actors declaring a lot of their Investment Portfolio so for example, I was reading one actor invests in a lot of crypto. What do you invest in Farhan?**

**FA:** I invest in people. I genuinely mean this. Whenever people start speaking numbers, I'm completely lost. I have no idea what has been said. My business partner at Excel absolutely loves it, he can discuss numbers for hours and look as fresh as a daisy while I look like I'm about to just pass out. For me, the exciting thing is to find a new writer, find a new director, find someone new to cast and to see that grow is amazing so when you say investing in people, you're really looking for new scripts and new people and new ideas.

**SA: You've donned so many hats. Which of those do you find most challenging, if any?**

**FA:** The most challenging to me is production by far because, like I've mentioned, production also asks me to think about things that naturally don't

come to me. But I love the side of producing where I get to work with a new director, with a new team, putting something fresh and new together.

**SA: What was your most challenging project, agnostic of what your role was?**

**FA:** I think the two most challenging: One as director was Lakshya, not because of how or where we shot, but about getting Army life absolutely correct. It was a huge driving force for me that Army personnel watching this film should feel it's authentic. Details matter when creating a world. Understanding their ethos, discipline, and what gives pride beyond protecting the country was crucial. Second, as an actor, nothing compares to *Bhag Milkha Bhag* as a challenge. That was a stellar performance.

**MB: You've been an assistant director on projects, learning the ropes of filmmaking. When it came to writing your own script, what was it that you wanted to change about cinema that you were watching?**

**FA:** Going back in time to when *Dil Chahta Hai* happened, I'm a child of watching films from the '70s predominantly. It was the time of the Angry Young Man, so I was a huge Bachchan fan, and watched a lot of his work. I was in school at that time, no films were being made for kids of my age, and it took a film to come along that made me realize the value of a good story being told to a crowd that is hungry for it. And that film was *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*, which came in 1988. It was Amir Khan's debut film, it was Mansoor Khan's debut film as a writer and director, and it completely changed what I felt as an audience about movies. It was fresh, it spoke a language that I could identify with, and then again, it was unique.

**SA: Young people today are heavily influenced by algorithm-driven behaviour on social media, and there's a growing concern about mental health and well-being. As someone experienced in dealing with online trolling and the impact of social media, what advice do you have for young people navigating these challenges?**

**FA:** Only seek validation from those

who know you well and have your best interests at heart, even if they tell you truths that you may not want to hear. Social media can destroy your soul if you get caught up in seeking validation from it. The number of likes shouldn't define the worth of your work or yourself. The validation of your work is separate from the validation of you as a person. If someone criticizes my work, I don't take it personally because it's subjective to them. They have the right to their opinion, but it doesn't define me. So, staying grounded and not seeking validation from social media is the first step to feeling better and not getting caught up in it.



# Forging Connections in Trade and Education at JLF

## Harshit Jhalani

India and the UK share a rich history of partnership, serving as a bridge between the two nations. The potential for a stronger India-UK partnership, especially in the realms of education and trade, takes centre stage in discussions.

At the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) International, one of India's largest literary forums held in London, a panel discussion sponsored by the University of York, saw Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Member of Parliament from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India and Vivian Stern MBE, Chief Executive of Universities UK come together to delve into issues and solutions aimed at bridging the India-UK gap.

Moderating the discussion, Sanam Arora, Chairperson of NISAU and Commissioner of UK's International Higher Education Commission, guided the conversation towards exploring avenues for enhancing collaboration and fostering deeper ties between India and the UK. Through insightful exchanges and strategic dialogue, the panel aimed to chart a course towards a more robust and mutually beneficial partnership between the two nations. Some excerpts...

**Sanam Arora:** Looking at the overarching India-UK partnership, what do you think are the big challenges and the big opportunities overall for us together?

**Shashi Tharoor:** I think Britain, post-Brexit, needs to make decisions about where it wants to go. Do you remember Boris Johnson talking about Singapore on the Thames? If Britain takes significant steps in that direction, obviously India would be a very key partner and a key target for that sort of approach on Britain's part. If Britain takes a different approach, then that would again have implications for the rest of us. I think some decisions have been made here which are still playing out in your political space. I get the



An engaging discussion at JLF in London on India UK partnership through knowledge exchange.

sense that there's been a little more political stability in the wake of Rishi Sunak's ascension and economic stability as well, and that from there perhaps things will go, but of course, the Labour Party is very confident of coming to power before too long and perhaps reversing many of the policy decisions and frameworks that these people have taken. Politically, if anything, the relative uncertainty is more here than in India. India, I think, is pretty clear in what it wants to do. It certainly sees the UK as a very useful partner in knowledge, in the education area, very open to free trade with a lot of discussions going on, as I mentioned earlier. On top of all of this, I think India's overwhelming desire is to put the Indian economy on the right track. We've got the tech stack, which has got a lot of attention globally now. The digitization of daily Indian life is something worth seeing. Now, you'll find chaiwalas and dhabas

with Paytm QR codes on their cards so you don't have to fish out your currency notes. You just scan your phone and make a digital payment. These sorts of things happening are quite remarkable. However, conversely, we do have an unemployment problem. We have the highest recorded unemployment in our history for some years, and we're not absorbing that many people. Where can Britain be helpful? I think certainly in coordinating India's access to broader networks. Commonwealth, at one point Europe; Indian companies loved to come to Britain to access Europe from here, but that's gone now with Brexit, so they have to find other ways. But perhaps if Britain were to be much more assertive about developing a significant set of economic partnerships across the Commonwealth, then India would be an obvious





We need to keep talking to people about what you will gain if you spend some time in India learning about this enormously important country

Vivienne Stern, MBE, Chief Executive of Universities UK

partner there too. A lot of this needs to be seen. India is already the second-largest investor in the UK economy after the US, and that's something which surprises many people, but it's been there and it's been growing over the last few years."

**SA: Share what your view of a utopian UK-India partnership looks like?**

**Vivienne Stern:** I would suggest starting with the points about inward mobility because there is obviously this enormous imbalance between the number of Indian students who come to the UK and the number of UK students who spend time in India. I think we need to change that. I think that should be a national ambition. We, in Universities UK, have had a very long-standing commitment to trying to double the number of UK students who have some international experience, and we put a lot of emphasis on India. Partly because when you think about the place that India is going to occupy, already occupies, and will occupy in the second half of this century, it seems to me absolutely essential that we have a better network of connections and a better understanding of India as a country. The numbers have gone up; the Turing scheme, which was introduced when the UK left the Erasmus program, provides funding for UK students to spend time in India, and it's the 10th most popular destination for UK students. I think it was a thousand last year; the numbers are a little bit down this year. We need to keep talking to people about what you will gain if you spend some time in India learning about this enormously important country. And I think that should be a national mission. I've always thought of that as a generational challenge. So, I think that's something we should commit ourselves to very seriously, and it might begin to restore a little bit of balance in this people-to-people relationship."

Harshit Jhalani has a degree in Management from the University of St Andrews, and a diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership from the Chartered Management Institute, UK.



# EMPOWER YOUR BUSINESS WITH EFFECTIVE TALENT

Unlocking Potential and Building Success

**Services Offered:**

- Executive Search & Recruitment
- Establishment of Boards & Advisory Boards
- Mentoring & Coaching Services
- Interim Management Solutions
- Graduate Recruitment Programme
- Business Consultancy Services



For more information, please contact:

Rozina Mehta

Tel: 07958 523177

Email: [rozina.mehta@rmcservices.uk](mailto:rozina.mehta@rmcservices.uk)

Website: [www.rmcservices.uk](http://www.rmcservices.uk)

LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/rozina-mehta](http://www.linkedin.com/in/rozina-mehta)

# Spotlight on Success

I came to study in the UK to propel my passion and interests as a young economist and consequently, contribute to the goals of global development. My ardent desire to be an economist led me to receiving my first job offer as a diplomat during the final month of my post grad.

I have been working with the Department for Business and Trade, Government of United Kingdom for more than five years now. It was a challenging start in the world of careers, in a new country, at the age of 22. However, it has been a transformative journey of learning and growing since then.

My current job role, involves liaising with partner countries around the world to forge and cement the trading relationship of the UK with foreign governments. The purpose is to implement the UK's free trade agreements (FTAs) to support businesses and drive economic growth. It has been a particularly exciting and challenging work as this is all being done for the first time in the country's history with no set precedence.

Hence, my experience as a student and professional in the UK has been an exhilarating learning opportunity that has helped groom my personal and professional self. Learning on-the-job about the governance and bureaucracy of a developed nation has helped me reflect upon the governing structures of other constituencies in the global economic race.

Koyesha Mukherjee did her M.Sc. Development Economics and Policy, The University of Manchester 2017-2018 and now works as Senior Policy Advisor, Department for Business and Trade, Government of United Kingdom.



Studying International Relations and not having heard about Spring Weeks or Spring Insight Days, I was a puzzled and overwhelmed first year student who didn't know whether to do politics, law, marketing, or research. Having never studied finance or learned about the consulting industry before, I pictured both industries to be dominated by students who knew exactly what they wanted to do from High School. With this, I started to join consulting clubs at university and build my CV with extracurriculars that provided me with transferable skills to start a career in M&A or consulting, along with developing a wide network of mentors and peers who walked me through the application process. Throughout the process, I reached out to my mentors for case study preparation, CV screening, and cover letter guidance which ultimately helped me land my placement at BlackRock last Summer! To me, the three most important aspects to focus on when applying to jobs are applying to roles that match your skill set, being genuinely passionate during interviews, and speaking to people that have landed positions in firms you are applying to. Focusing on these three priorities was my key to unlocking opportunities that I once thought were never even an option for me!

*Suhana K is in her final year BA(Hons) in International Relations in Kings College London. She will soon join Blackrock (one of the most competitive investment management firms) as a full-time analyst.*

Embarking on my journey to University College London, I ventured into the unknown to pursue my undergraduate studies in Information Management for Business. As an international student, the transition was more than just geographical; it was a leap into a vastly different academic and corporate culture. Initially, I was oblivious about the concept of 'spring weeks' and how they serve as a stepping stone to summer internships, and ultimately graduate schemes. This realisation struck me late, making me doubtful about my career prospects. Yet, instead of letting this setback deter me, I resolved to adapt and overcome it. Immersing myself in the vibrant student life, I joined the Economics & Finance Society among other consulting and technology-focused societies to build my experiences and improve my skillset. This not only broadened my horizons but also connected me with mentors who had navigated similar paths and helped me throughout my application process. This made me gain the confidence to navigate the process successfully. Securing a summer internship at Deutsche Bank, and then converting that into a graduate scheme, made me learn a profound lesson: success is not predetermined by your starting point, but by your willingness and determination to pursue growth and seize opportunities.

*Zara Ratnani has a B(Sc) in IT from University College London. She soon begins work as a Technology Analyst with Deutsche Bank*



# A Period of Transition: Edvoy's Perspective

## Sadiq Basha

There has been a lot in the press recently about international students. Initially negative, the coverage overlooked many of the benefits of introducing international students to campus such as diversity, a global perspective and academic collaboration.

There have been some positive responses to the news, citing these benefits and to supporting less advantaged students. But there is no doubt the Higher Education sector is facing challenging times and there is a requirement for change.

At Edvoy, we have a commitment to supporting quality student applications and have the utmost respect for higher institutions globally.

### WHY IS EDUCATION SO IMPORTANT?

I established Edvoy to be built with integrity. I was an international student from Chennai with big ambitions to study in London. In a time before the web and information was more easily accessible, I was mis-sold a university by an agent. Realising I was not alone in my experience, I dedicated myself to helping students in a similar situation whilst studying. I established IEC Abroad in 2006, rebranding to Edvoy in 2020. And also New College Group in 2011.

Edvoy's mission is to support students with honest and transparent advice, so they get the best from their studies and institutions can benefit from diversity and develop truly global cultures.

Pathway or foundation courses are at the heart of the current affairs debate. The negative stand is that they provide an unfair advantage to international students. In fact, they are a legitimate route for international students to gain the skills and qualifications they must meet to pass entry requirements for the course they wish to pursue. They were established to promote fairness.

Foundation courses were designed to assist student demographics. Firstly, English students from less-privileged backgrounds, typically achieving lower grades and possessing vocational qualifications geared towards immediate employment rather than academic pursuit. Secondly, international students coming from educational systems where their school-leaving credentials are not directly comparable to those in the UK. They were meant to make education accessible to a more diverse population.

### EXACTING STANDARDS AT EDVOY

At Edvoy, we take our responsibilities in helping students achieve their future success seriously. Everything we do is focused on providing a quality service. For example, we work with industry bodies to ensure their standards are



Sadiq Basha is the CEO & Founder at Edvoy.

met and implemented throughout the business. We are members of BUILDA, ICEF and AIRC and share their best practices with our recruitment partners.

As part of their onboarding, everyone who joins the Edvoy team must complete Edvoy Academy. This is important training that covers compliance and processes through to destination and type of course information. It has always been mandatory for our counsellors to complete British Council training. We have recently made it a requirement for all staff, even those who don't come into contact with students, to complete their certificates by the end of February 2024.

We have a dedicated compliance team, the leader of which worked at UK Visas and Immigration in India for 15 years. We are also developing an AI system to support the team in their academic and financial document checks.

Finally, at the heart of the debate to come, we must not forget the reason we are actually here and doing what we do. We want to support students in achieving their ambitions. Education has the power to change lives, and we believe everyone has the right to education.

## Connect to a world of education experts.

Trusted application support for students, academic institutions and recruitment partners.

 **85,000**  
Students Counsellled

 **750+**  
Institution Partners

 **4000+**  
Agents

 **300,000**  
App Downloads



**edvoy**  
Study Abroad.  
Simplified.



# What the young student leaders say...

## Engage, Aspire Influence

**Adhwant Mishra**

Warwick India Forum (WIF), associated with the Warwick University Students Union, Coventry, United Kingdom is the largest student-run forum in the UK. We at WIF are committed to bringing Indian issues to the fore and our impetus is to highlight socially relevant discourse for students from a variety of backgrounds. We strive to bring our vision "Engage, Influence, Aspire" to life by inviting prominent Indian figures to speak at the university, conducting intellectually stimulating and entertaining events, and advising students on their professional careers throughout the year!

Our flagship event has seen eminent names like Shashi Tharoor, Dr Subramaniam Swamy, Kiran Bedi, Rajkumar Hirani, Kapil Dev, Masoom Minawala, Chetan Bhagat, Rohan Joshi from the fields of Indian business, politics, entertainment and sports grace us with their presence over the past 13 years.

Our efforts were duly recognized when we were awarded the Bright Network Commercial Awareness Award 2022, a prestigious accolade that celebrates our engagement with the commercial landscape and our students' acumen in the business realm.

In sum, WIF's impact is multifaceted. We are not just an organisation that hosts events; we are a catalyst for community building, intellectual engagement, and cultural exchange.

*Adhwant Mishra is a final year student pursuing an undergraduate degree in BSc Economics from the University of Warwick. He has interned with firms like Ernst & Young and ASK Private Wealth and is the Coordinator of Warwick India Forum.*



Warwick India Forum events draw a huge crowd looking to engage in discussions on India.

## Indianizing the University



South Asian Heritage Week at City, University of London.

**Akanksha Kumar**

As City, University of London Students' Union President, I represent and amplify the voices of 20,000 students at City. At the Union, we change and adapt with our student body, always questioning our work to make sure we are making every day better. We thrive on finding innovative solutions to add value to the experience at City. I am proud to have introduced the first ever South Asian Heritage Week at City, reflecting a commitment to diversity and inclusion, as well as the huge diaspora that hails from South Asia. We will be quite literally painting the town red this March with the first ever Union Holi celebration for students here at City bringing a burst of cultural vibrancy to the student community. We recognise the need in the student body to feel at home when they are so far away from it, while bringing global cultures for every student to learn experience whether we provide it in the form of our advice services, turning our pavilion into mini Punjab, having Bollywood music echo down the halls of Tait building, or simply a cup of free chai, this year at the Union - we bring a bit of home to you.

*Akanksha Kumar, the first Indian SU president at City SU since its independence as a charity, is a devoted advocate for student well-being. A hardworking Bayes Business School graduate, who moved from Mumbai to London at the age of 17 is passionately committed to enhancing the student experience for international students, embracing her Desi heritage with pride.*





Meet and greet organised by Indian society to welcome students from September intake.

# The Power of Volunteering

**Jil Sheth**

It all started with a hope of wishing I had more support and a sense of belonging through my student journey in the U.K. The spirit of volunteering in me kept trickling, and I found passion in supporting students, empowering them and advocating for their rights. Over my 5 years of guiding students' global journeys, I have directly supported over 4,000 individuals by conducting more than 16 pre-departure sessions, 40 events, countless webinars, one-to-one support, and answering their queries daily at Heriot-Watt University alone.

Today, events at Heriot-Watt University have more than 300 attendees, and we try to make it an inclusive, barrier-free experience with free tickets and no membership fees for the society. And for people who tell me one can not earn money by volunteering, here is an answer- from 2018 to 2022, I clocked over 500 volunteer hours, winning Heriot-Watt's prestigious Stefan Kay Volunteer of the Year Award and the Diamond Volunteering Award. Beyond university accolades, I was honoured as the National Union of Students (NUS) Scotland's Student of the Year Award Finalist 2023 - validation of my volunteering impact at the national level. Externally, I even volunteered for NISAU as a National officer, British council ambassador, Equate champion, STEM ambassador and was even invited to meet UK's PM and at the House of Lords for my work. Volunteering is so powerful, and I, through my lived experience can guarantee that it would surely make you more employable.

*Jil Sheth, is a PhD student and president of the Indian Society and Watt Women in STEM at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh. She also serves as NUS Representative and National Officer for NISAU. By focusing on accessible post-study careers, she uses her experience to influence reforms through the #WeAreInternational campaign.*



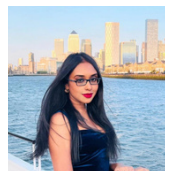
# Inclusivity is key

**Dipika Gokulnath**

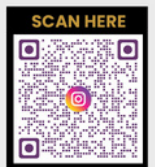
As President of the UEL Indian Society, it is an honour to witness the vibrant tapestry of cultural exchange within our community. Our events serve as inclusive platforms, welcoming not only Indian students but also individuals from diverse countries, while celebrating the rich tapestry of Indian culture.

At our diverse celebration of all Festivals spanning the length and breadth of India; Inclusivity, is at the core. We strive to ensure that every student feels represented and valued. Our commitment extends beyond festivities, with a focus on Mental health, Managing cultural differences and Personal and Career development through workshops with a vision to focus more on Fund-raising and Charity events in 2024, to help the Indian Student body. Collaborations with organizations like NISAU further amplify our efforts, in extending the reach of Indian Cultural Awareness. Through regular Meet and Greets, Sports Tournaments, and Artistic performances, we continue to bridge cultures and forge lifelong connections, embodying the spirit of unity in diversity."

*Dipika GokulNath is a MBA student and the President of the Indian Society at University of East London. She is also working as an Intern at the Mayor's Fund for London.*



**kapil** STUDIO  
HAIR SPA & BEAUTY



- ▶ Tailored Haircut
- ▶ Masters in Hair Color  
(Balayage, Highlights, Hair Line, Full Hair, Root Touch-up)
- ▶ Hair Spa Treatment  
(For damaged Hair)

**10% DISCOUNT VOUCHER**

Valid till 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2025

Code: NISAU10

Bring the copy of this page to avail the Discount

Google  
Reviews  
4.9 ★★★★★

L'ORÉAL  
Authorised Salon

Ammonia Free colour



Happy Clients **10000+** | **100+** Celebrities | Years of Experience **18+**

BOOK APPOINTMENT: ☎ **020 8001 2209**

📍 81 Headstone Gardens, London, United Kingdom

# Stress about work and study? Chill with chai

A student-run cafe in East London is teaching international students to find work-life balance and learn new skills

## Vatsal Parikh

In 2018, Srinivas Lagadapati came to the UK as a student. But just like innumerable others, student life also meant the struggle to balance work and study. Informed by his own situation and aware of the importance of a part time job for foreign students, Lagadapati established LEO Recruits Ltd. Through this organisation, Lagadapati has managed to get employment for hundreds of Indian students in different parts of the UK. He made a beginning by recruiting students to work part time at his own restaurant.

Lagadapati's Chill with Chai Cafe is run almost entirely by international students offering them flexibility and encouragement. "I have classes all five days of the week, which leaves me with hardly any time to work. The classes are held online for two days, and in person for three days. At the beginning it was difficult to find the study-work balance, but Chill with Chai cafe gave me the flexibility and necessary support," says Siddique Shaikh, who is studying MSc in International Business Management at University of Kingston. Shaikh took leave from work during exams and with time he became confident in managing his work and studies.

Sadhana Srinivas, MSc in Data Analytics at Queen Mary had lectures in the morning and would work at Chill with Chai Cafe in the late afternoons. Working at the front end gave her good exposure and helped develop interpersonal communication skills. For Sadhana, the fact that she was assessed on written assignments and did not have exams took some pressure off, but there were times when she needed to concentrate on her work, and needed time off from work. "I did get study leave when I needed to, so



Srinivas Lagadapati's Chill with Chai offers students a much needed work-study balance.



that was really nice." It worked out so well for her that she decided to only work at Chill with Chai Cafe, as it filled the required 20 hours of part time work she is entitled to as an international student.

Heena Patel who is studying MSc Project Management at BPP University works four days at the cafe during daytime. This has allowed her to conveniently attend her classes and studies. Patel who is married says that the best part of working at Chill with Chai Cafe is the fact that she has managed to strike a good work-life balance giving her mental peace. "Having a cooperative employer means that it has been a great experience to work here." A good work atmosphere and the opportunity to develop new skills like using social media platforms to increase business, learning about food logistics, and understanding customer preferences will be useful when they enter the world of work.

Lagadapati is content with the fact that he has been able to help Indian students get a taste of the UK's working life. "My main motive is to help Indian students by giving jobs at my restaurant, which helps them to supplement their incomes. This not only allows students to pay their rent, and other bills, but also provides an opportunity to gain invaluable UK work experience which will help them to develop transferable skills."

*Vatsal Parikh is an LLM commercial and corporate law graduate from the Queen Mary University of London*



*in 2022. He is a qualified lawyer in India and an aspiring solicitor in the UK working with one of the law enforcement organisations in the UK. He is also the National Officer (Legal, Research & Events) at NISAU.*

# Bridging Cultures, Building Prosperity

**Ramesh Arora**

The 'London Dream' – the imagery of Tower Bridge, the chime of Big Ben, the lights of Piccadilly, and the classic Bollywood stills, are carved on the inward eye of every Indian. Similarly, the exoticness of India with its historical monuments and culture fascinates tourists across the globe. With a massive 21.8 million outbound visits from India in 2019 and a total international tourism spending of US\$22.9 billion, Indian travellers play a significant role in the global tourism scene.



Ramesh Arora is the Founder and CEO, Signature Hotels Group and Namaste Bharat.

Moreover, the UK welcomed over half a million visits from India in 2022, underscoring the robust interest in British destinations. The resulting expenditure of £764.32 million highlights the economic potential inherent in these exchanges. In the dynamic realm of global tourism, collaborative efforts between nations are imperative for fostering growth, facilitating cultural exchange, and ensuring economic prosperity.

Reflecting on these numbers, it becomes evident that a booming tourism industry fuels economic development and cultural exchange. This growth is not just about meeting pent-up demand but also reflects changes in Indian travellers' preferences. This trend extends to the UK, showcasing the diverse attractions available. Considering these trends, and promoting sustainable tourism and hospitality practices with a flavour of 'mindfulness' can further boost the existing touristic and hospitality synergies of the nations.

In the UK-India relationship, tourism and hospitality play vital roles in fostering understanding, cultural exchange, and economic growth. With leaders guiding the way, the future of this partnership holds promise and potential. Additionally, it's crucial to consider the importance of reverse tourism, boosting travel from the UK to India. This reciprocal relationship enhances cultural exchange and economic benefits for both countries.



# Is The Housing Crisis Real?

**Saurabh Arora**

The discussion surrounding student accommodation in the UK often swings between crisis and exaggeration. A closer look, particularly through the lens of University Living's initiatives, reveals a nuanced landscape of challenges and innovative solutions. University Living leverages its extensive experience in student accommodation to address the pressing needs of students worldwide.



Saurabh Arora is the Founder & CEO, University Living & Uninist

Through innovative platforms like Uninist, tailored to flexible accommodation needs, the company endeavours to bridge the widening gap between escalating student demand and the limited accommodation options available.

According to University Living's Indian Student Mobility report for 2023-24, there were 750,000 students who reached the UK were 150,000 students were from India, out of which 132,000 are anticipated to be enrolled in Higher Education. Even in the worst circumstances in 2024-25 there will be 75,000-100,000 students coming from India. This stark demand underscores the existing gap in student housing but also showcases University Living's pivotal role in mitigating this challenge by providing more off campus housing choices like PBSA, apartment and homestays i.e 2 million beds in 515 cities globally, the platform is a testament to the potential for addressing accommodation shortages effectively.

The company's approach, emphasizing early planning and a wide array of housing options, from private student accommodation to homestays, aligns with the need for a proactive stance on student housing. Moreover, collaboration among government entities, universities, students, and housing solution providers remains paramount in effectively addressing the accommodation needs.

Universities play a pivotal role in educating stakeholders and developing accommodation solutions tailored to diverse needs.

In conclusion, while the narrative of a housing crisis persists, the reality is a complex interplay of challenges and solutions.

University Living's role in providing accessible, quality accommodation highlights the importance of innovation and collaboration in overcoming these obstacles, suggesting a hopeful outlook for the future of student housing in the UK.

# INDIA UK EDUCATION CONFERENCE 2024

The Forum is a day-long series of plenaries, breakouts and keynotes and promises a paradigm shift in the dialogue on international higher ed and the India-UK corridor, placing young people at the heart of these conversations. 500 participants from across the sector come together for a day of transformation, in-person, in London.

01 | 40+ | 500 | 10  
DAYS | SPEAKERS | PARTICIPANTS | FOCUS AREAS

Here's a sneak peek into some exciting sessions. Others shall remain a mystery!

## Is UK still a world class study destination?

The notion that the UK is a world-class study destination is taken for granted. Yet, as the terrain of global education shifts beneath our feet, UK universities are sprinting to keep pace. This session sets the stage to unravel the fabric of a 'world-class offer'—from academic prowess to breakthrough research, from global alliances to unrivalled student experiences and graduate outcomes. Let us dive into the dynamic benchmarks that define what "world-class" really means in a world that doesn't stand still.

In the face of stiff competition and the emergence of new educational powerhouses, the UK's higher education sector must navigate funding flux, policy upheaval, and the need for relentless innovation. Join us as we question, challenge, and brainstorm actionable strategies to ensure the UK doesn't just participate but leads the education revolution. Welcome to the frontline of change.

## Unlocking Growth through Skills: The Currency of the Future

If there's one transformative action that could simultaneously invigorate both the British and Indian economies, it would be a substantial investment in the skills of our people. Skills are the currency of the future; and key to unlocking future opportunities. In these times of rapid and substantial shifts in skill requirements, the ask is to not only address immediate challenges but also shape the economic, social, and cultural trajectories of both nations. The session will also spotlight critical areas for skills partnerships between the UK and India, offering a roadmap for collaboration.

## Mind the Gap: Preparing the workforce of the future

Employability is the number one requirement of both students and employers. Universities need to bridge the gap between education and employment. But are we really preparing students to be both highly employable as well as generate employment? What support needs to be provided to students to support their transition into the workforce?

What are the current and future skills needs that we need to provide training for? How do we fairly and accurately measure individuals' skills, knowledge and outcomes?

This special focus panel brings together the alumni, mentor, assessor and university voice to draw together unique and action-oriented insights to turbocharge graduate outcomes and prepare the workforce of the future.

## A two-way street: Internationalising home students

Student mobility in the India-UK corridor is largely a one-way street. A miniscule percentage of British students experience India, even for short-term programmes as compared to the millions of Indians who experience the UK through a myriad of courses. This difference in experiences is leading to an inequity of outcomes. Join us as we discuss why it is imperative to provide our students with opportunities to become global citizens and how we can take best advantage of what the world's third largest economy has to offer.



## Eyes on the prize: Is TNE the future?

Developing a compelling offer for international students as well as a sustainable model of growth necessitates an explicit focus for the UK to 'mainstreamise' its transnational offer. Environmental concerns, rapid development of new forms of learning and opportunities afforded by India mean that the TNE can be the big prize delivering wins for everyone in international higher education. But delivering education transnationally is complicated and India has an evolving regulatory and operational landscape. This session aims to unpack the key challenges in delivering offshore education in a manner that is sustainable, and delivers a worthwhile student experience.

Our panel, featuring the only foreign institution to have set up a branch campus in India, will provide invaluable insights on navigating the complex but wonderful UK-India TNE opportunity.

## The Manifesto for International Higher Education: What must the incoming government do?

Alright, thinkers and movers of international higher education, prepare for a pivotal gathering unlike any other.

From the Home Office's review of the Graduate Route to the Department for Education's review of Agents; from worrying net migration levels to international education being our third largest export...this year, as the UK's international higher education sector stands at a crossroads, we're not just discussing policy—we're setting the agenda.

Join us as we feature stalwarts of higher education and leading policymakers in challenging assumptions, questioning norms, and, because we love a good plot twist, introduce perspectives that will turn the debate on its head.

This session will craft a compelling narrative that the incoming government cannot ignore. Come design your manifesto for your sector. This is the rallying point for those who dare to reimagine the future of international higher education.

## Do you practice what you preach?

Every organisation claims to be student first, yet disappointingly few actually act upon it. Featuring representatives from all corners of the industry, join us in this session as we explore the best practices deployed across the student ecosystem - what works well, and what does not. Are you actually student first?

## Koffee with NISAU (and friends)

The love affair between Indian Students and UK universities is dwindling yet again. Surprising to many, yet unsurprising to us, around half of Indian students are now looking elsewhere to study. Come find out why. Is this just down to dependents, or visas? What are your students thinking, feeling and experiencing? Conversations about students often miss the key ingredient - the voice of the students. Our panel of student leaders and influencers will help you get a 360° view into the hearts and minds of your students.



The University of Glasgow is delighted to be supporting the India UK Achievers Honours for a second year. The work that NISAU does in supporting our Indian student community and the wider sector is invaluable and the Honours provides a fantastic platform to celebrate the achievements of our Indian alumni locally and globally.

Shonagh Maak, Head of International Stakeholder Engagement (External Relations) at University of Glasgow



As we navigate through a landscape of unprecedented challenges impacting international students, the Achievers Showcase emerges as a beacon of hope. This initiative is a vivid reminder of our collective responsibility to cultivate and recognize the potential in every student.

Hersha Pandya, Executive Director University Partnerships UK & Europe, MSM

**Team Members:** Aarzo Abha, Aishwarya Giri, Dr Aishwarya Mishra, Anushree Chaudhary, Anuj Avhad, Ashraf Nehal, Ayyaz Ansari, Darshan Dabhi, Jetal Zala, Jyoti Mangal, Manan Jagnani, Nasir Arafat, Prachi Dang, Ruhi Khan, Sakshi Pandit, Sameer Dhore, Sanam Arora, Sarthak Ahuja, Dr Vignesh Karthik and Dr Vijaya Priyadarshini.

**Interns:** Aditya Mehta, Arya Dhamorikar, Avika Bhattacharya, Diya Singh, Gazal Gupta, Gunjita Charan, Harshit Jhalani, Hasti Modi, Kumar Vishesh, Nikita Bansal, Pranav Deshmukh, Piyush Mittal, Raajeshwari Kashyap, Riya Agrawal and Saumya Sachdeva.

Supported by



## HEADLINE SPONSOR

---



## PLATINUM SPONSOR

---



## GOLD SPONSOR

---



Supported by



## FIRESIDE SPONSOR



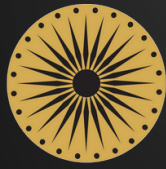
## SILVER SPONSOR



## BRONZE SPONSOR



THE UK'S OLDEST AND LARGEST NETWORK OF INDIAN  
STUDENTS, ALUMNI AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS



# nisaau

National Indian Students and Alumni Union UK

JOIN THE NISAU FAMILY



NISAU\_UK



NISAU.UK



NISAU.UK



MULTI-AWARD WINNING

Winner | Best Global Student Support  
Winner | Outstanding Contribution to the Global Higher  
Education Industry  
Winner | India-UK Thought Leadership Award  
Highly Commended | Association of the Year  
Highly Commended | Marketing Campaign of the Year