

# Economist with a passion for Politics

Tanveer Mann

**Abishek Sachdev** is the CEO of Vedanta Hedging and has recently become the youngest Hindu councillor for Hertsmere. His new position, he hopes, will allow him to help the community of Hertsmere as much as he can. His company, Vedanta Hedging is an independent firm which assists clients in obtaining fairer Interest Rates and Currency hedge pricing, as well as advising them on what is most appropriate for their business from an impartial perspective.

Despite diverting to business more recently, Mr Sachdev has always had a passion for the world of politics from a young age. Since his election, he has rejoined with a newfound enthusiasm and wealth of experience, ready to tackle the problems of today. "It feels fantastic, and I feel greatly honoured that I'm able to serve my community having lived here since a young boy. I'm also very appreciative of my family, friends, and fellow Councillors who helped me to campaign successfully," he said enthusiastically.

Why now and why Potters Bar? "The key reason is that as a Hindu, we are taught that service to community or 'seva' is a fundamental part of daily life. Having lived in Potters Bar for 26 years, I thought that this was the ideal community for me to start helping. I've worked with dozens of MPs, Ministers and Lords across all parties in the last three years and have seen first-hand the real change that political pressure can bring about."

The road to being elected did not come easy, particularly because he was the youngest councillor in his area and did not



have previous direct campaigning experience. "To be elected, I had to apply and demonstrate why I would be a good community advocate for my local area, as well as promote and accept the key policies of the Conservative Party. I had an interview with the Leader of the Council, and also a panel interview by five different existing Councillors. I was open and candid about my experience during my interview process, and explained that I had held several elected positions at University which involved democratic elections."

Discussing the benefits of the invaluable experience he has gained over the years, he said: "Having studied Economics, worked at HM Treasury, and working in banking and financial services, I am able to bring numerical analytical skills to my role. A key passion for me is explaining complex financial concepts in simple terms. For example, I have already contributed to both Audit and Financial Scrutiny committees which have a powerful role as a 'check and balance'."

As with most councillors, Mr Sachdev has an agenda which he would like to tackle - one which directly relates to engaging the younger voters who live in Potters Bar and

Hertsmere, as well as more ethnic minorities. He added, "I also want to ensure that at every opportunity, we promote and support SMEs to grow and develop. There has been some recent work done to help provide flexible, subsidised office space for start-ups and this is exactly what I want to build upon. This is because SMEs are vital to generate growth and employment."

As a successful CEO and an ambitious councillor, it is evident Mr Sachdev's passion runs wide and deep. One must ask how he manages to achieve a balance between the two. Admittedly, he muses, "throw an active two-year old into the mix and it really tests your work-life balance! It has not been easy, particularly since a lot of the meetings are in the evenings. However, I have a close support network of family and a superb wife who helps me to manage this! In addition, I am able to conduct a lot of work remotely for both constituents and the Council."

Politics is often considered foreign to many Asians, with many dominating the more 'traditional' fields of medicine or accountancy. Mr Sachdev has shown his enthusiasm for both and hopes he can encourage more younger Asians to do the same. Mr Sachdev said: "Attitudes are changing fast amongst young Asians. Asians love to network and talk, and learn a lot from watching what others do in their community. I hope to engage younger Asians by helping them understand that the very things they care about such as education, employment, business growth are all influenced by politics."

## Swaminarayan School pupils break new boundaries

The publication of the GCSE results of 2014 has delivered another record breaking year for pupils at The Swaminarayan School. The percentage of pupils achieving 5A\*-C is 100% once again; the percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C is 96% (national average 68.8%) with 81% of the grades at A\*-B. 98% percentage of the pupils achieved 5A\*-C grades with English and Mathematics. The performance score per pupil of 660 has broken all previous standards at the school.

The most outstanding



result for a pupil was for Vishali Pala who achieved a phenomenal 15A\* and 2A grades, a staggering 17 GCSEs; Anushri Pindoria achieved 12A\* and 4A grades; Samanta Zahir achieved 12A\* and 1A grades; and Eshaan Verma achieved 8A\* and 6A grades. Aditya Venugopal achieved 7A\* and 7A and Monique Amin achieved 6A\* and 8A grades.

Headteacher **Nilesh Manani** said, "The government has imposed a lot of changes on the current cohort. It is pleasing to deliver another fine set of results for the pupils despite the pressures of these changes. We didn't make it easier for them by introducing International GCSEs in the sciences. Yet with a clear strategy that focuses on what is best for the pupils, we have managed to deliver another outstanding set of results. We are all very proud of the pupils and congratulate them for another superb year."

# Mum's joy over cancer daughter's GCSE success

- Dhiren Katwa

Congratulations to **Mohini Radia Samani** from Birmingham on passing her GCSEs with flying colours. Cancer patient Mohini, 16, got grades six A, three A-star and a C. She did her GCSEs at King Edward VI Handsworth School where she will return next month to do A' Levels in Biology, Chemistry, Maths and Economics. Her proud mum, Urvashi, said: "I'm thrilled at Mohini's results. She's worked very hard to get to where she is now and a great source of inspiration to me too."

Mohini, pictured, was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, a form of blood cancer,



exactly seven years to the day of her GCSE results.

Mohini, from Smethwick, said: "When you are diagnosed with cancer your life is turned upside down. It was a very scary time and I was not sure what life had in store for me. I had to grow up very quickly and I almost felt that I had to turn into an adult overnight. One of the biggest changes I faced after starting treatment was school. Due to the

treatment I was often not well enough to attend school. I found this very isolating because school is such a big part of life and all of a sudden it was just gone."

Cancer remains, still, a taboo theme within the Asian community. "One should not fear or be ashamed of having cancer," says Mohini. "You can still live life to the full and make the most of each day."

Every day, 10 children and young people in the UK hear the shocking news they have cancer. Although survival rates are over 80 per cent, cancer remains the single largest cause of death from disease in children and young people in the UK.

## Harrow Mayor visits Hare Krishna Temple on Janmashtami

The mayor of Harrow **Cllr Ajay Maru**, joined thousands of people at the Hare Krishna temple for the annual Janmashtami festival to celebrate birth of Lord Krishna. The Mayor, who was joined by the council's deputy leader **Cllr Keith Ferry**, said: "This is one of the most special days in the Hindu calendar and I am honoured to have been able to attend and celebrate the birthday of Lord Krishna with the thousands of people

that attended.

"For many Harrow residents this is their local temple and I hope they enjoyed the festival which this year focused on the values of hope and peace which is relevant and important in today's society.

"It was also amazing to see how the grounds were transformed and brought to life by the thousands of volunteers who helped."

## Culture

# Nadia Manzoor brings 'Burq-Off' to London

As the debate about immigration and integration rages on in the UK, one young British-Pakistani Muslim woman is set to provide a unique insight into the challenges faced by immigrants themselves in an alien land.

'Burq-Off!' is an hilarious new one-woman show by writer and stand-up comic **Nadia Manzoor**, who is daring to explore the eternal migrant tussle between the need to better integrate and the religious and cultural demands of their own communities.

After a series of sold-out performances in the United States, the show arrives in Nadia's hometown of London this September.

Written, produced and performed by the 31-year-old, 'Burq-Off!' is an autobiographical 'variety' show in which Nadia draws on her own life experiences to play 21 different characters - from her domineering Pakistan-born father and radicalised twin brother, through her saucy school friend and overbearing aunts, to the Islamic studies teacher with a sideline in pornog-



raphy. she grew up, Nadia - as with countless other children of immigrant families who choose tribalism over integration - struggled with the rigidity at home and the strange 'freedoms' the outside world offered.

At university, her shackles began to break as Nadia refused her parents' plea to join a Muslim women's association and instead took up theatre and fell in love with an Irish Catholic.

After university, as her identity conflict intensified, Nadia fled to Boston amid threats to her and her partner. In the land of the free, her relationship faltered and her estrangement from her family deepened.

She later moved to New York where she dealt with the turmoil in her life by penning a poignant and funny memoir in-between teaching improvisational skills to women in the Big Apple.

The memoirs later became 'Burq-Off!': one woman's poignant and inspirational journey of self-discovery.

She was required to wear loose-fitting clothes; the accidental uncovering of an ankle inside the house was considered 'Haram' and contact with boys was forbidden or carefully monitored. As