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Vol 1 Issue 6 June 2008

PRAVASI BHARATIYA

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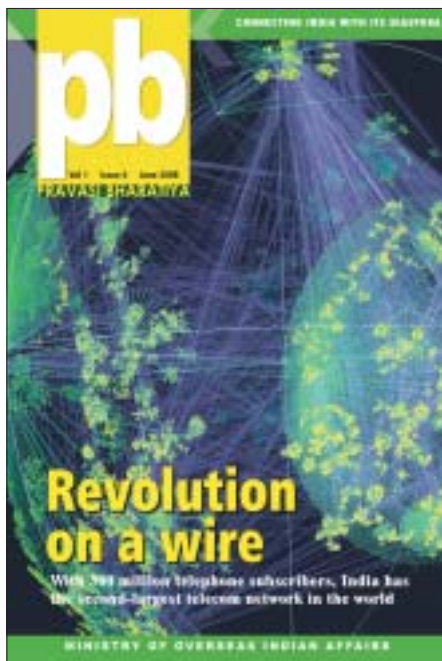
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f rom the editor's desk



April wasn't the cruellest month, not certainly for India's telecom industry. The country, at rank bottom of the digital divide, shot to No. 2 in the world in mobile subscription after China, replacing the United States, the supremo in the wireless market for decades. Today, Indian telecom companies add an astounding 9 to 10 million new subscribers to the network every month. According to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), the country's telecom watchdog, 10.16 million new wireless subscribers joined India's telecom network in March to take the total subscription to 300.51 million with a tele-density of 26.22 percent. In the same segment, the subscriber base in China stood at 550.50 million and 250.93 million in the United States.

"If the last few years in telecom were exciting, it will be even more exciting in the coming years," says TRAI Chairman Nripendra Misra. "In terms of numbers we would easily achieve the target of 500 million by 2010," Misra tells *Pravasi*. Such are the perspectives on India's telecom revolution. This issue of *Pravasi* presents a vantage view of a sector which seems to have ignored the global economic slowdown and spiralling inflationary trends. A Price Waterhouse Coopers report adds the clincher: It says at a compounded annual growth rate of 28 percent, India could very well achieve 539 million mobile subscribers by 2010, with revenues topping \$35 billion from the \$22 billion now. *Only connect*, said E.M. Forster, in a different context.



This issue of *Pravasi* takes a quick detour and looks at NRI remittances and foreign investments in India. An estimated 5.7 million India workers abroad sent home \$27 billion in 2007 to make India the top recipient of migrant remittances, according to World Bank data released in March 2008. There was a difference though. Instead of the Middle East with its estimated 5 million NRI workers, the United States with about 2.4 million NRIs was the main remittance source. So, the demographics of remittances are shifting. However, what has it meant for the country and how are trends in investments by foreign investors shaping the country's economic activities. We take a tour of the key facts and figures. But at the heart of it all what is gladdening is what RBI Governor had to say at a forum in New York recently: "Following sustained higher growth in India, a reverse process of brain flow has also begun by way of foreign nationals and expatriate Indians expressing their interest for pursuing more fruitful ventures in India. As a result, corresponding trade and private business linkages have also started growing."

From the month of June, a quiet but decisive revolution takes place in foreign travel: India will get its first e-passports. To be issued to diplomats and officials first, it will eventually reach the citizens within the next few months. The other big news making a splash is that of Reliance Big Entertainment foraying into Hollywood production and tying up with the likes of Brad Pitt, Tom Hanks and six other big stars in the United States.

Come 2012, India aims to produce 124 million tonnes of steel and by 2015 hopes to become the world's second-largest producer of finished steel. Meanwhile, financials have been pretty good with public sector steel undertakings posting a profit before tax of Rs. 206.24 billion in 2007-08 from Rs. 53.98 billion in 2003-04. Around 193 memoranda of understandings have also been signed with various states including Orissa, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Chattisgarh. Another development brought a glimmer to India's infrastructure sector: the opening of the Bengaluru International Airport. The spanking new airport, a product of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model is expected to handle 10-12 million passengers till 2012. Read more about these and other news in our economy section.

We also look at the stories and personalities shaping our diaspora narrative in our regular sections. Environment has been one of chief concerns and we take you to Manila, a small village in Karnataka, where 79-year-old Achyutha Bhat has for decades carried out a "suranga revolution" — a nature-friendly method of tapping water, one of humanity's most valuable and fast shrinking resources. Join Bhat for a sojourn in suranga country.

Happy reading...



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INDIA RINGING

From the rank bottom of the digital divide to No. 2 in the world for mobile phone subscribers, India is adding on at a rate of nine-ten million new subscribers every month. By 2010, revenues will top \$35 billion from the \$22 billion now. The Indian telecom story is an amazing tribute to the country's capacity for scalable growth.



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REMITTANCES TOP NRI PRIORITY

The benefits of remittances in generating higher levels of consumption may come at the expense of long-term growth. Recipient states should, therefore, devise policies to help promote economic growth and social welfare, says **Kul Bhushan**.



RAANNDEZVOUS KUTCH

P 38

With amazing vistas, an intriguing history and a rich tradition coloured by mystical enchantment, Kutch's experience is at once remote and strange...

ROYALS WIN INAUGURAL IPL **P 44**

Regarded as underdogs early on, Rajasthan Royals, led by the intrepid Shane Warne, clinched the inaugural Indian Premier League beating Chennai Super Kings in a last-ball win thriller. Yusuf's blazing 56 runs, studded with 4 huge sixes and 3 fours, and his 3 wickets earned him the Man of the Match in the final. Under Warne's stewardship, players like Yusuf Pathan and Swapnil Asnodkar blossomed into future Indian prospects.



IN TRIBUTE

Makhan Singh, an unsung Sikh hero of the Kenyan freedom struggle, and largely forgotten today, was the founder of East African trade union movement.



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Correction: In the preceding issues, the Confederation of Indian Industry has been inadvertently referred to as the "Confederation of Indian Industries" in the advertisement on the back inside jacket of Pravasi Bharatiya. The error is regretted.

After US tests, India to get first e-passport in June



India's first e-passport, which will make travel easy, is expected to be issued in the month of June. It will be issued to diplomats and officials first. Others may have to wait for about 10 months — or even more. If all goes well, the first e-passport will be issued around June 15 to President Pratibha Patil or Prime Minister Manmohan Singh — or both.

The e-passport project is on a roll. A recent test conducted in a U.S. government laboratory was so impressive that American officials remarked that they would need to study the Indian technology. An eight-member official Indian delegation in May had visited Washington carrying 25 test e-passports made in India. The e-passport will have thicker front and back cov-

ers. The rear cover will have a small silicon chip, smaller than a postage stamp, as well as an embedded rectangular antenna.

The eight officials, drawn from the ministry of external affairs, the National Informatics Centre (NIC), the Indian Security Press (Nasik) and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Kanpur, had an appointment to keep at the inter-operability test centre in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

"We found that while the American e-passport took a minimum of 10 seconds to be read, our passports took just four seconds. The reason for the quicker response of the chip in Indian passports was the software developed by IIT-Kanpur and NIC," said a beaming Indian official.

"Unlike the U.S. software which is proprietary and developed by vendors, ours is entirely made in-house. So there is no commercial aspect to it," said Rajat Moona, professor of computer science at IIT-Kanpur. And

those extra seconds will make valuable difference when the immigration deals with long queues. "The Americans were highly impressed. If it is two and a half times faster, it means the crowd can be cleared that quicker," the official said.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation has set down norms how e-passports may be 'read', but it does not prescribe how the information in the chip is to be 'written' or how its security features should be. These guidelines were decided by a technical committee headed by the NIC director general and were made part of tender notice.

There are certain advanced security features incorporated in the Indian design. For example, to prevent anybody from reading the passport from afar, other countries prescribe that the document should be carried in a metal jacket. But the Indian e-passport cannot be read unless it comes into contact with the 'reading' machine.

At UK mission visa lines go virtual

The Indian High Commission in London — among the busiest of diplomatic missions — bid a cheery farewell on May 29 to snaking queues and grumpy customers surrounding its visa section.

For as of May 29, the task of issuing visas to Britons wishing to visit India were outsourced to the world's largest company handling such work — fittingly an Indian firm. To many of the estimated half a million Britons who visit India every year, the move could not have come a day sooner — inefficiency at the Indian visa section in London is legendary, and a security staff was roughed up by an annoyed female applicant earlier this year.

Launching the first of five visa offices to be opened across Britain, India's new High Commissioner Shiv Shankar Mukherjee said on May 27 the new facilities would enable people to apply online and obtain a visa without even having to turn up at the offices.

"The person who needs to travel to India is the most

important customer we have," Mukherjee said, describing the Indian mission in London as "easily the largest visa-issuing mission India has."

Offices are to be opened at two locations in central London, another in Southall — a London suburb with a large ethnic Indian population — and two more in the cities of Birmingham and Edinburgh. The work will be handled by VFS Global, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the travel company Kuoni India handling 10 million visa applications for 23 missions in 42 countries.

Starting out with about 75 employees, the company will conduct a review later this year and open more offices if needed, an official said. The application of new technologies means visa applications can be made online, paid for by credit cards and can be tracked at each stage of the process because they will be bar-coded, Mukherjee said. "These should help remove hassles, apprehension and suspense," he added.

Europe favours legal Indian workers

With the government negotiating a slew of labour treaties, Indian workers may soon find job-hunting in the continent relatively painless. India has also agreed to join the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) further paving the way for smoother labour movement to Europe.

The Indian cabinet had on May 1 approved of India applying for admission to the 122-member, Geneva-headquartered IOM — the multilateral body that facilitates inter-governmental migration consultations and projects.

Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) Vayalar Ravi will lead a delegation to the IOM Council meeting in Geneva on June 18 to 19, when India's application will be formally submitted, considered and approved.

An official noted that the "most important advantage" for India's membership would be the capacity of

the IOM to "facilitate bilateral instruments with potential destination countries".

The first in line may be Denmark, only the latest European country to come to India looking to plug its demographic hole of young working population. Earlier on May 8, a fact-finding team of the Danish Immigration Services had come to India — a follow-up to the visit of Denmark's Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen in February.

"We are planning to sign a social security agreement, as well as a labour mobility partnership," an MOIA official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said.

The Indian side has proposed that the labour mobility agreement be a tripartite one, with the IOM as third party. The Danish seemed to welcome our suggestion. But it is still in an early stage, so this has to be decided," said the official.



India, Bahrain to ink labour pact

Alawi at Kumarakom, Kerala — a famous tourist destination.

"A draft of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been initialled and the agreed minutes to this effect have also been cleared at the highest level. The MoU delves into labour mobility and manpower development," said the official.

Further details were announced later at Kochi where Ravi addressed a press conference.

There are about 280,000 Indians working in Bahrain and nearly 80 percent of them are believed to be from Kerala.

India has signed similar labour agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait to safeguard the interests of Indians working in those countries.

India second biggest exporter to UAE

India has become the second biggest exporter to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) after China, following a sharp drop in the value of the U.S. dollar-pegged local currency, the dirham.

India has come to the second position for the first time after the creation of the UAE, 37 years ago, the *Emirates Business* 24-7 newspaper reported, citing figures issued by the government-controlled Emirates Industrial Bank (EIB).

Stating that the UAE's imports from India shot up seven times within 5 years, it said the value of Indian imports rose from 9.2 billion dirhams (\$2.5 billion) in 2002 to 67 billion dirhams (\$18.2 billion) in 2007. According to the report, India accounted for around 16 percent of the UAE's total imports of 418.7 billion dirhams (\$114 billion) last year. China's exports to the UAE in 2007 stood at an all-time high of 69.9 billion dirhams (\$19.03 billion), an increase of around 33.9 percent over previous year.

"There are several factors for this increase — the decline in the dirham against other currencies, mainly the U.K. pound and the euro by over 40 percent and because of the sharp fall in the U.S. dollar, to which the dirham is pegged. This made imports from other countries, mainly Asian more competitive," it said.

Another reason for India's rise was that the European Union (EU) has been reluctant to sign a free trade pact (FTP) with the UAE and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members "at a time when there has been substantial progress in negotiations for such an agreement between the GCC, India and China".

Minimum wage fixed for Indian domestic workers in Oman

India has fixed the minimum wage for Indian domestic workers in Oman at 75 Omani riyals (\$195) per month, effective from June 1. "The Embassy of India in Muscat, Oman, has, under the instructions of the Government of India, decided to raise the wages of Indian house maids coming to the Sultanate from the existing RO50 (\$130) per month to RO75 per month with effect from June 1, 2008," the Indian embassy said in statement.

India's Ambassador to Oman Anil Wadhwa said in the statement that this was necessitated by inflation and rising cost of living worldwide, particularly in Oman, as the wages of Indian household workers have remained static for over 15 years. Other countries supplying household workers in Oman are the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Indonesia, Tanzania and Bangladesh.

The embassy also stated that during 2007, it registered 7,797 labour contracts of household workers from India and helped in repatriating home 65 household workers who were facing problems.

According to Wadhwa, the embassy was also taking several steps for the welfare of Indian household workers in that Gulf nation. These include making prior attestation of labour agreement by the embassy mandatory to allow household workers to leave India, orientation programme

for household workers prior to their leaving India, contractual binding for the sponsor to provide a pre-paid mobile phone to the household worker on arrival, the sponsor allowing the household worker to report to the embassy within four weeks of his/her arrival in Oman, free legal and assistance for any household worker who is ill-treated, and the embassy paying for the medical treatment and airfare in deserving cases.

This apart, the embassy, in collaboration with Oman's Ministry of Manpower, has prepared flyers in six languages, including four Indian regional languages, containing 'dos and don'ts' for Indian household workers in Oman.

These have been placed at all immigration counters and in commercial aircraft, which are normally used by Indian household workers coming to Oman.

According to the statement, apart from the helpline number (8007 7000) operated round-the-clock by the Omani manpower ministry, the Indian mission also has a round-the-clock helpline number (2469 8491) that any aggrieved Indian household worker can call and record his/her complaint.

In 2007, the embassy stated, it issued 41,637 passports and 22,671 visas while the figures for the first five months of the current year were 18,133 and 12,221, respectively.

India, UAE agree to institutionalise India-GCC dialogue process

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have agreed to institutionalize the India-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) dialogue process with regular meetings.

The two sides agreed to institutionalize the dialogue process, which as of now is held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) meeting, during a meeting between visiting Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee and his UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

"A proposal was put forward by the Indian side to institutionalize the India-GCC dialogue process and the UAE side has agreed to this," India's ambassador to the UAE Talmiz Ahmad said on May 13, briefing

reporters about Mukherjee's two-day visit to this Gulf nation.

The India-GCC dialogue process started in 2003 on the sidelines of the UNGA meeting and the practice has continued over the years.

The GCC — comprising the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar — is increasingly coordinating the political, economic and defence and security policies of its member states. The GCC Customs Union, formed in 2005, constitutes the world's second largest trading bloc. The group is now working on adopting a single currency by 2010.

It is in the face of this that the India-GCC dialogue process was started so that the region can have a combined political relationship with India.

Australia, India move towards FTA

The Australia-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) may come through as early as next year with Australian Trade Minister Simon Crean and India's Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath agreeing last month that the FTA feasibility report would soon be ratified.

During the annual Joint Ministerial Commission meeting on May 20, Crean discussed Australia's market access requests with Nath, as well as its concerns about India's sugar export subsidies. Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to bringing about a successful conclusion to WTO's Doha Development Round talks this year. India is Australia's fastest growing major export market for both goods and services, increasing at over 30% annually over the last five years.

Hollywood bigs join Reliance venture



Reliance Big Entertainment, the media and entertainment arm of the \$100 billion Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group, on May 18 announced a major foray into Hollywood by providing development funds to Brad Pitt, Tom Hanks and six other superstars in the US. Apart from Pitt's Plan

B Entertainment and Hank's Playstone Productions, Reliance Big Entertainment has struck development deals with Nicolas Cage's Saturn Productions, Jim Carrey's JC 23 Entertainment, George Clooney's Smokehouse Productions, Chris Columbus' 1492 Pictures, and Jay Roache's Everyman Pictures.

Reliance Entertainment chairman Amit Khanna made the announcement at a press conference at the Majestic Hotel, Cannes on the sidelines of the Cannes Film Festival.

"This is just the beginning of our journey into Hollywood," said Khanna. "We have a dominant posi-

tion in India, but when it comes to motion pictures it has been obvious that we need to extend our footprint to Hollywood".

This is the biggest foray of an Indian entity in Hollywood's motion picture industry. It provides for the creation of a development silo for each of the production entities. Thirty films are likely to emanate from Reliance's co-financing and 10 will go into production.

"We watch Hollywood movies. But, do we make it? Not so far. Today we say, we can," said Prasoon Joshi, creative director of Reliance Big Entertainment.

21 Indian BPOs in world top 100



Twenty-one Indian companies, including Infosys Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Wipro, are among the top 100 BPO firms in the world, according to a new study. Five of the Indian firms figuring among the 10 best outsourcing service providers are: Infosys (No.3), TCS (6), Wipro (7), Genpact (9) and Tech Mahindra (10), according to the study — '2008 Global Outsourcing 100' — compiled by the International Association of Outsourcing Professionals (IAOP).

Accenture and IBM head the list published as an advertising feature by IAOP in the current Fortune 500 issue of Fortune magazine.

The evaluation team was led by IAOPs' managing director of Thought Leadership, Jagdish Dalal, a renowned outsourcing expert.

PricewaterhouseCoopers to launch India-Africa desk

Multinational assurance, tax and advisory services company PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has launched an India-Africa desk in Johannesburg on May 22 in an effort to stimulate two-way foreign investments and joint ventures.

Project leader Troopti Naik said the international desk was being launched to facilitate business linkages and joint ventures between entities in India, South Africa and the rest of Africa, and vice-versa. Naik said a comprehensive survey report on business between

India and South Africa, to be released by the end of May, would feature interviews with the leaders of companies from both countries. It will also look at the business trends and assess the psyche of Indian companies wishing to do business with Africa.

Stanley Subramoney, PwC's Deputy Chief Executive Officer, who is piloting this ground-breaking public-private sector initiative, said: "We are very excited about the India Desk initiative and at growing its relevance and profile within the business community, both in both countries.

Ratan Tata in world's top business brains list

After being named among the 100 most influential people in the world by *Time* magazine, head of India's Tata Group Ratan Tata has been included in the list of 73 biggest brains in business for his Rs.100,000 car — Nano.

Conde Nast Portfolio, a US business magazine, in its May issue on all-round brilliance, has identified busi-



ness' biggest brains including media czar Rupert Murdoch, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, and investor Warren Buffet.

Tata is considered a 'game changer' by the magazine, other categories in its brilliant list being connectors, taste-makers, rebels and upstarts.

INDIA Ringling

From the bottom of the digital divide to No. 2 in the world for mobile phone subscribers, India is adding on at a rate of nine-ten million new subscribers every month. By 2010, revenues will top \$35 billion from \$22 billion now, reports **Arvind Padmanabhan...**

April saw an unprecedented development in the Indian telecom industry's history. The country, which was at the bottom of the digital divide with a rather abysmal penetration of its telecom network about a decade ago, was ranked No.2 in the world for mobile phone subscribers after China, replacing the previous leader in the wireless market for decades — the United States.

In fact, Indian telecom companies now add an astounding nineteen million new subscribers to the network every month, making every major global player, be it in the handsets, services or infrastructure businesses taking a closer look at the country — if not having a presence in India already.

"Three years ago, a target of 250 million telephone subscribers was considered too ambitious. You have proved the critics wrong and reached the milestone well in time," Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told a telecom conference here recently.

"I am very happy the telecom department has ambitious targets

for the future — 500 million telephone connections, 40 million Internet connections and some 20 million broadband connections," he added.

According to figures available with the sector's watchdog in the country Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), 10.16 million new wireless subscribers were added to India's telecom network in March to bring the total number of subscribers to 300.51 million with a tele-density of 26.22 percent.

Specifically in the wireless segment, the subscriber base rose to 261.09 mil-

lion — against 550.50 million for China and 250.93 million in the U.S. estimated by the telecom regulator.

"If the last few years in telecom was exciting it will be even more exciting in the coming years," said TRAI Chairman Nripendra Misra. "In terms of numbers we would easily achieve the target of 500 million by 2010," Misra told *Pravasi Bharatiya* (See interview).

The predictions by the regulatory

authority chief was also reinforced by a recent report prepared jointly by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham), a leading industry lobby, and global consultancy and accounting firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC).

Growth of Indian telecom industry

(Subscriber base in mn)

	March 2006	March 2007	March 2008
Wireless	98.78	165.11	261.09
Wireline	41.54	40.75	39.42
Total	140.32	205.86	300.51

(Source: Telecom Regulatory Authority of India)



At a compounded annual growth rate of 28 percent, India is all set to achieve 539 million mobile subscribers by 2010, said the report, adding, revenues will top \$35 billion from \$22 billion now.

The report also said that the next phase of growth would be in the hinterland for which operators needed to devise relevant packages for rural subscribers, both in terms of handsets and services. Similarly, another major consultancy Boston Consulting Group said only one in 20 of the world's first two billion mobile subscribers lived in India, as many as one in every four of the next billion subscribers will be an Indian, with a major growth in the rural areas.

"The tele-density in the urban areas is over 50 percent, in rural areas it is around 8 percent. The digital divide continues. So clearly the future lies in the rural areas," said Misra.

"Telecom access to rural India is going to be the most important devel-

opment in the country since the Green Revolution of the 1970s and 1980s," the watchdog chairman added — a view universally shared by experts and industry leaders.

"Metros have roughly reached their saturation point. It is the villages and small cities that will be targeted for



increasing consumer base," said Tarvinder Singh of Motorola, who oversees its marketing and product management division.

"Over the course of next two-three years service providers will be aggressively expanding to remotest areas of the country. Motorola has been pushing handsets for the rural market at dirt-cheap prices for sometime now," he added.

And the competition in rural areas and smaller cities and towns — once thought of as low-volume, low-revenue business — is also beginning to hot up, as S.D. Saxena, Director-Finance for the state run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd explains.

"We used to have an edge in the rural and small town markets. But it is not the same today with global players coming in. We take competition very positively. We think it'll bring the best out of us," Saxena said.

In fact, the fast growth and the future potential for telecom in India

has led to all the five top global mobile handset manufacturers — Nokia, Sony Ericsson, Motorola, Samsung and LG Electronics — to set up manufacturing bases in India.

The country imposes no cap on foreign direct investment in the manufacturing of telecom equipment in the country, though a 74-percent limit has been set in the case of telecommunications services.

Some global consultancies predict that even though mobile handset manufacturers in India were mainly addressing local demand, next few years will see as much as 30 percent of the production being exported to Africa, the Middle East and other parts of South Asia, which have significant demand for low-cost handsets.

The Department of Telecom (DoT) says revenues from telecom manufacturing sector was expected to have crossed \$6.5 billion in 2007-08, with this segment set to become one of the largest globally by 2010.

The Chief Executive of Finland's Nokia Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo, who had visited the company's manufacturing facility in Chennai and New Delhi last year said India had overtaken the US as its second largest market for handsets after China.

Kallasvuo said 60 million handsets were shipped



from the factory near Chennai, the Tamil Nadu capital, since it started production two years ago and that he also expected to maintain its growth in the country and expand its headcount. "India is playing an increasingly important role in the



global economy buoyed by impressive growth, skilled manpower and tremendous business opportunity," said Kallasvuo, whose group invested \$500 million in the factory, employing around 4,700 people.

Little wonder, global consultancies like Gartner have made fairytale-like projections for the Indian telecom market. The US-headquartered tech research firm said revenues of the Indian mobile phone segment will exceed \$25 billion in four years, growing at 22 percent annually.

"With more marginal users forming the bulk of addressable market, low service costs and inexpensive handsets will help to unlock the inertia and facilitate adoption of mobile services," says the firm's senior analyst Madhusudan Gupta.

"This trend, coupled with the emerging-market handset initiative by vendors and operators, will boost adoption of mobile services in India's semi-urban and rural provinces."

It was for these reasons that Britain-based global mobile phone giant Vodafone created a major international buzz by acquiring a controlling stake in India's third largest private phone company Hutch-Essar for \$10.9 billion, sending the valuations soaring for rivals like Bharti Airtel and

Reliance Communications. "India is a tremendously exciting and fast moving market and I am confident that the Hutch-Essar business would make a major contribution to the Vodafone group over the coming years," the group's Indian-born chief Arun Sarin, who steps aside in July, said while making the announcement on the takeover.

He also said Vodafone would be investing \$2 billion over the next two years in the Hutch-Essar telecom venture to particularly tap the rural market, multiply the infrastructure and improve the tele-density in the country. As India enters a new phase of growth, telecom operators and the subscribers are also waiting for the introduction of next generation telephony.

Communications Minister A. Raja says the new policy on for 3G telephony will be ready by June.

"Foreign players will also be allowed in 3G. We have a 74-percent foreign direct investment limit in the telecom service sector. Whether there is common auction or open auction, there will be no bar on foreign players," the minister added.

(Arvind Padmanabhan is Executive Editor-Business at IANS and can be contacted at arvind.p@ians.in).



'More exciting times ahead for Indian TELECOM INDUSTRY'

With over 300 million telephone subscribers and a tele-density of 26 percent in India, the next few years would prove to be even more exciting for the industry, Nripendra Misra, the Chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), the sector's watchdog, tells *Pravasi Bharatiya* in an interview. Excerpts:

Q: What has been the main driver of India's robust telecom growth and where does the potential lie for the future?

A: The telecom sector in India has registered remarkable growth during the last few years propelled largely by the unprecedented growth of mobile telephony. The growth in an infrastructure sector like telecom is not just the growth of a sector — it has a multiplier effect on the whole economy. The key to the growth of telecom in India has been liberalisation, reforms and competition. The positive regulatory framework has played a major role. Three years ago, a target of 250 million telephone subscribers by 2007 was considered too ambitious. We could achieve this target a few

months ahead of schedule.

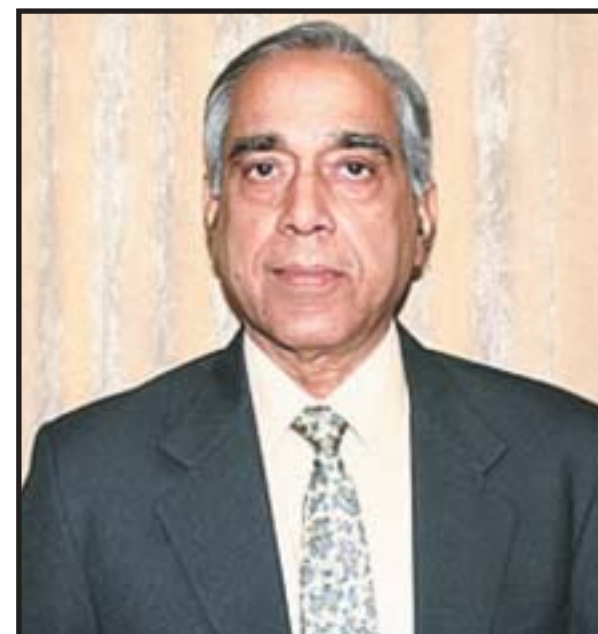
The telecom policy of 1999 envisaged a tele-density of 15 percent by the year 2010. The overall tele-density of the country is already over 26 percent now. Today, we have over 300 million telephone subscribers of which around 40 million are wire-line subscribers. Ours is the second-largest network after China. The developments in the sector have resulted in massive investments and explosion in supply — signs of a vigorous, competitive and fast-growing sector.

While tele-density in the urban areas is over 50 percent, in rural areas it is around 8 percent only. The digital divide continues. Clearly, the future lies in rural areas.

Telecommunication access to rural India is going to be the most important development since the Green Revolution. Research analysts feel that mobile voice is overwhelmingly the engine of growth followed by Next Generation Network (NGN), broadband and data.

Q: What is the future potential for domestic and global players? Do you think the projection of 500 million telecom subscribers by 2010 is feasible?

A: The target of 500 million telephone connections by the year 2010 is very much achievable. Even with 300 million telephone connections, the tele-density of the country is only about 26 percent. Mobile telephony is growing at an annual rate of over 90 percent. On an average, over 8 million subscribers are being added every month. Besides the basic telephone service, there is a huge potential for different value-added services. In fact, the real potential for telecom service growth is still lying untapped. The telecom sector is attracting significant



Q: How well is India prepared for the introduction of next-generation (NGN) mobile phone services? Do you think the Indian telecom market, in terms of technology, is growing on a par with the global scenario?

A: India is well prepared for the introduction of NGN. Being a late starter in the telecom scenario, India has the advantage of using the latest technology and so it is in a better position when compared to many other countries as far as introduction of NGN is concerned.

Besides, the TRAI has identified NGN as a priority area. I can say with confidence that technologically, the Indian telecom network is second to none.

Q: How important has competition in the sector helped nurse growth in India and what has been the telecom watchdog's stand in this regard?

A: The ideal strategy is to allow free competition and the market forces would ensure healthy competition. The Indian telecom sector is the liv-





Then Telecom Secretary Dinesh Mathur and TRAI Chairman Nripendra Misra hold a copy of the BDA-CII Report 'Wireless India: Catalyzing Next Wave in Economic Growth' as BDA Chairman Duncan Clark looks on, in New Delhi, June 6, 2007.

ing example of healthy competition among telecom service providers. Since 2003, competition has been introduced in the access services. This has resulted in a drastic reduction in tariff but exponential growth in the sector.

Q: How has the lowering of tariff in Indian mobile phone services from Rs. 16.80 (42 cents) per call in 1991 to around 40 paise (around one cent) or thereabouts now, helped in the expansion of India's telecom network?

A: Telecom tariffs in India are one of the lowest in the world. The telephone, which was treated as a luxury few years ago, has become a part of day-to-day life of the common man. The reduction in cost of the mobile handsets along with the low tariff has made this possible. There is a direct relationship between tariff reduction and increase in the number of telephone connections.

In India the revenue model of the telecom companies is based on volumes. For this, the service has to be affordable for the common man.

Q: What are the main challenges facing the sector as we go forward?

A: The challenge of the day is to search for new cost-effective ways to roll out telecom services in rural areas. It means one has to choose proper and effective technologies for deployment and leverage available infrastructure to reduce cost and time of rolling out the services.



Those service providers who create the right business would emerge winners and the rest would remain spectators. Connectivity of networks and cost of bandwidth are also important to facilitate broadband usage. Availability of local application and content is another area of concern. Most of the content available on website as of today is in English. The content in local and regional languages will increase vernacular broadband utilisation.

The convergence of technologies and emergence of new applications is another thrilling area. More revolution is round the corner in the broadcast and entertainment industries. The emergence of Internet protocol TV and mobile TV will change the scenario in the coming years.

Wireless technology is the future growth driver for which spectrum is the most important input. The task of spectrum management in a multi-user and multi-usage scenario is more daunting and crucial than ever before. In sum, if the last few years in telecom were exciting, it will be even more exciting in the coming years.

Remittances top NRI priority

The benefits of remittances in generating higher levels of consumption may come at the expense of long-term growth. So recipient states should devise policies to promote economic growth and social welfare, says Kul Bhushan

Sending money home remains the top priority for most NRIs. After arriving — legally or illegally — in the host country, the first task is to start earning; and then sending a major part of their earnings back home to the family. Just like arriving can be legal or illegal, sending money can also be legal or illegal — by official transfers through a bank if the NRI has legal status or through the black market in case of illegal status and/or a better exchange rate.

An estimated 5.7 million Indian workers abroad sent home \$27 billion in 2007 to make India the top receiver of migrant remittances, according to the latest World Bank data released in March 2008. Instead of the Middle East with its estimated 5 million NRI workers, the United States with about 2.4 million NRIs was the main remit-

tance source. The NRI remittances are over three times the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to India. So should the Indian government look after NRIs more than foreign investors? Yes and no. NRI remittances are primarily sent to family members to support them for their survival.

Once these remittances improve their living standards, they are invested in consumer goods, housing and land, and bank deposits, according to a new IMF study published recently. Very rarely are these remittances used to establish new businesses and industries.

So India still needs to roll out the red carpet for foreign investors because investment is one of the drivers of economic growth. And anyway, NRI remittances make up only



'Reverse brain flow has begun'

Speaking at the World Leaders' Forum, Columbia University, New York, in April this year, Dr. Y V Reddy, Governor, Reserve Bank of India, observed: "We are optimistic about a continued mutually beneficial engagement with the global economy. Indians are providing services in various parts of the world — United States, Middle East, Britain and East Asia. Their services range from the less

skilled, at one end of the spectrum, to the very highly skilled professionals at the other end. Their annual contribution by way of remittances is about 3 per cent of GDP now. These are in addition to export of services, especially software which are of the same order. Indians are among the most significant foreign students to attend the universities for higher education in the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, Singapore and China among others.

"Following sustained higher growth in India, a reverse process of brain flow has also begun by way of foreign nationals and expatriate Indians expressing their interest for pursuing more fruitful ventures in India. As a result, corresponding trade and private business linkages have also started growing.

"Recently, a global bank launched a product in India — 'Account for Expatriates' — to provide value-added services for the rapidly growing expatriate community in India. This engagement with the global economy has matured into a self-reinforcing process as benefits are perceived by many and they are percolating to a large number of people in India."



The Fund, however, study found that the benefits of remittances in generating higher and continued levels of consumption may come at the expense of long-run growth. High remittances may actually decrease economic growth in some countries due to lower productivity. So the recipient governments should devise economic and other policies to promote economic growth, stable exchange rates to discourage illegal transfers and social welfare.

Some of these negative outcomes can be seen in Punjab and Kerala with high migrant workers' remittances although these are not evident on the Indian economy as a whole driven by high domestic investment, production and consumption.

The IMF report concludes: "Globalisation and the ageing of some developed country populations will ensure that demand for migrant workers remains robust for years to come. Hence the volume of workers' remittances is likely to continue to grow and, with it, the challenge of unlocking the maximum social benefit from these transfers."

In other words, the NRI money will keep flowing in more and more.

about three percent of India's GDP.

"In many developing countries, remittances provide a lifeline for the poor," said Dilip Ratha, senior World Bank economist. True. The IMF study shows that workers' remittances can contribute up to a whopping 25-20 percent of the GDP of some countries like Haiti, Tonga and Bosnia; 20-15 percent for Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Haiti and Albania.

Many NRIs and Indians think that the GDP of Pakistan relies a great deal on remittances from its workers abroad but Pakistan does not feature among the top 20 recipient countries in this list.

The IMF report, 'Macroeconomic Consequences of Remittances', by six economists has a surprising omission — India — in its list of top 20 recipi-

ent countries for 2004, the year that has comprehensive global data on this subject.

The top slot is occupied by Mexico at \$16.6 billion in remittances for 2004. Yet the World Bank's 'Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008' gives the figure of \$27 billion for India in 2007.

This figure cannot be for just that year because NRIs have been sending money home for over half a century. It's not just this chart without India as the text categorically states on page 10, "Mexico was the largest developing country recipient of workers' remittances in 2004 with US \$16.6 billion, followed by the Philippines, Lebanon, China and Morocco (figure 3.3)".

Strangely, there is no mention of

India among the top 20 although Pakistan stands at No. 7.

The IMF report goes on to state: "Taking a longer term perspective, the five largest developing country recipients of workers' remittances over the period 1990-2004 were, in order, India, Mexico, Lebanon, Egypt and Turkey."

The report's conclusions do contain some home truths. Initially, the workers send money to support their poor families.

Later, they send more for domestic investment in white goods, housing and land; and for bank deposits for future security. This comprises most of the remittances.

Today, the workers insist on how their remittances should be used since the recipients act as their agents.

FDI leaps 56 percent in 2008

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows (including reinvested earnings according to international FDI classification norms) into India touched \$29.89 billion during the period April 2007-March 2008, up from \$22.07 billion during last year, an increase of 35.43 percent according to RBI.

In 2007-08, the country received FDI of \$24.5 billion as against \$15.7 billion in 2006-07, showing a growth of 56 percent. In 2005-06, the growth was even sharper at 184 percent, up from \$5.5 billion in 2004-05.

Encouraged by the performances in the last four years, Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath recent-



ly expressed confidence that India will receive \$35 billion FDI in financial 2008-09. Nath said rise in FDI shows the growing confidence of the foreign

investors over the Indian economy. He said that even when the world was in the midst of a financial turmoil, India has continued to be a safe and stable investment destination.

Nath said the proactive measures taken by the government also had pushed FDI into the country. He added that the recently announced civil aviation policy had also helped in attracting foreign investment.

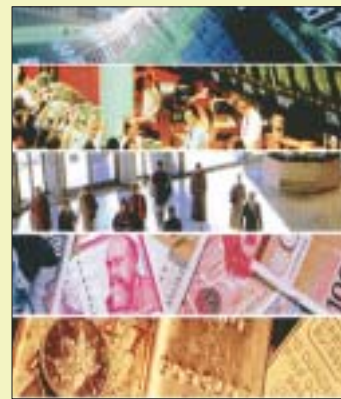
The Commerce Minister further said that foreign investments of about \$9 billion, for which shares of the respective companies could not been issued in 2007-08, have already been carried forward into the first month of the current fiscal. With this, he said,

"I am confident the momentum will continue," he added.

In 2006, India ranked fourth after China, Hong Kong and Singapore as a major investment destination in Asia. "We now expect our position could have reached the third position, after China and Hong Kong," Nath said.

If reinvestment of the foreign earnings is accounted for, FDI in 2007-08 will be \$30 billion as against \$19.5 billion. Global firms have brought in most of the investment through tax havens like Mauritius and Singapore during 2007-08. Therefore, Mauritius and Singapore are the two biggest investors in the country. The inflows from Singapore have more than doubled to \$1.67 billion in 2007-08 as against \$578 million in the previous year. Investments from Japan have grown the fastest from \$55 million in 2006-07 to \$761 million in 2007-08. Besides Mauritius and Singapore, the US and UK were the largest sources for FDI in the first 11 months of 2007-08 — \$1.02 billion and \$1.12 billion, respectively.

Nath said that nearly 80 percent of the FDI inflows in 2007-08 are for greenfield projects and not for expansion or acquisitions of the existing projects.



The investment route

The existing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy permits investments under the 'automatic route' and the 'approval route' in most, though not all, of the activities. Under the automatic route, the investors are allowed to invest in the identified sectors up to the threshold specified for those sectors, without the need for a prior approval from regulators or the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB). In respect of the other sectors, the investors will need a prior approval of the FIPB, before undertaking any investment. The FIPB is functioning under the aegis of the Ministry of Finance and comprises representatives of various government departments, who are expected to ensure that the proposed investment addresses the administrative and other concerns before allowing investments in the concerned activity. Similarly, under the FII route, the FIIs registered with the securities market regulator (the Securities and Exchange Board of India — SEBI) can invest in the secondary market.

The major sectors that attracted FDI are telecom, real estate, construction, electrical equipment, software and hardware and banking sector. CMP Asia, Mauritius, has invested \$654 million in HDFC Housing

Finance. Singapore-based Biometrics Marketing invested \$459 million in Relogistics Infrastructure in the petroleum sector. More investment is expected in petroleum, manufacturing and electronic hardware sectors as well. —IANS



the country's growth potential".

"The reasons behind this interest in the Indian telecom market by Gulf operators are not too difficult to see," said Abhijit Barua, head of strategy at leading Indian ICT company Sify Technologies.

"In India the telecom penetration level is lower compared to the Gulf. Etisalat has penetration levels of around 150 percent in the UAE with a subscriber base of 6.4 million as of 2007. The UAE's other telecom operator Du got 1.5 million subscribers within a year of starting," he said.

"At the same time, the Indian telecom market has opened up in a major way with the authorities issuing around a dozen fresh licences in the recent past," Barua said.

"Among those who have acquired these new licences are companies with non-telecom backgrounds and they would obviously be looking at having partners with telecom technology expertise," he said.

Under Indian rules, foreign firms can acquire up to 26 percent stake in an Indian operator. Videocon, for one, has been approached by several Middle East telecom operators.

"There is interest from Middle East firms. Etisalat, Qatar Telecom have approached us," published reports

quoted Videocon chairman Venugopal Dhoot as saying.

Gulf companies have keen interest in the Indian market as these companies have huge cash surpluses and the Indian market gives wide-ranging opportunities.

Etisalat, for example, had revenues of \$6 billion in 2007 and profits of \$2 billion in 2007 with a subscriber base of 6.4 million. This happened despite increasing competition and liberalisation of the country's telecom market.

"We will continue to invest in our chosen segments and will continue to further transform Batelco to effectively face additional competition in the future," Batelco's Kiliaropolous was quoted as saying.

Telecom rates in the Gulf are among the highest in the world, while in India it is among the lowest.

Yet the opportunities in India remain too lucrative to be ignored.

"Though India has the lowest service rates in the world, telecom companies in India have still made their cost structure very profitable," Sify's Barua said. It is not mobile services alone where opportunities exist in the Indian market. There is scope in additional services too.

While operators like Bharti, Reliance and the state-run BSNL have both wireline and wireless operations, companies like Vodafone and Idea have only wireless operations and they would very much like to offer additional services, according to Barua. Another avenue opening up in India is the mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) under which a foreign firm can use the existing infrastructure of an Indian operator and then customise its own products and sell these under its brand name.

"The opportunities in Indian telecom sector are seemingly limitless. Vast areas in rural India still do not have basic telecom connectivity. This is where India's incredible telecom growth story is likely to head," he said.

—Aroonim Bhuyian/IANS/
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'India to become eighth wealthiest place by 2017'

India with its increasing number of millionaires is likely to reach the 8th position among the world's top 10 wealth centres by 2017, says a report by banking giant Barclays. This, according to the report, signals a global shift in the distribution of wealth and could make terms like 'G7' or 'Developed' outmoded categorisations for wealthy economies.

The Household Wealth Index, developed by both Barclays Wealth and the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU), forecasts that India from its current position of 14 would become the eighth-largest wealth market by the year 2017.

The index also predicts that the number of dollar-millionaires would increase from the current negligible number to more than 400,000 in the coming ten years. India will experience one of the largest absolute increases in the number of dollar-millionaires over the next decade, ahead of nations such as Canada, Spain, Hong Kong and Italy, forecasts the research report. It also stated that the wealth held by high networth Indian households would total to about \$1.7 trillion in 2017.

The factors that will drive India's wealth going forward is inherited wealth, promoter's wealth, contribution from professionals and celebrities, says Satya Bansal, CEO, Barclays Wealth, India.

"This report reflects a seismic shift in world wealth holdings, with increasing focus on emerging countries like India in the global wealth management industry. We are seeing a cultural change driving attitudes towards wealth in the country. Barclays Wealth is expected to start its operations in India by the second half of this year. —IANS

India attracting Gulf telecom operators



The Indian telecom market has come into sharp focus in the Gulf with a number of telecom operators of the region expressing their intention to foray into the subcontinent. Even as the United Arab Emirates (UAE)-based telecom operator Etisalat eyes a \$1-billion stake in India's Tata Teleservices, Bahrain's Batelco said that it was keen to enter the Indian market.

"The big opportunities are in Africa, or India and Asia-Pacific," media reports quoted Batelco's Peter Kiliaropolous as saying. "Really, in the rest of the Middle East, there is nothing." Qatar's Qtel has also said that it was interested in the Indian GSM market so that it could "capitalise on

Robust demand and an investment boom in the Indian steel sector is driving production capacities. By 2015, India aims to be the second-largest steel producer in the world.

Dateline 2012: India targets 124 million tonnes of steel

India's annual steel production will touch 124 million tonnes by 2012 with a planned investment of Rs. 2.76 trillion (\$64.46 billion), up from 109.17 million tonnes in 2007-08, Minister of Steel Ram Vilas Paswan said in New Delhi on May 23. Paswan released his Ministry's four-year report card *Forging New Frontiers*, detailing the headway made by the steel industry in the four years of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) rule. Paswan said the country's crude steel production was growing over 10 percent annually from 34.71 million tonnes in 2002-03 to 53.90 million tonnes in 2007-08.

By 2015, India hopes to be the second-largest steel producer in the world, Paswan said. "The production of finished steel went up to 55.27 million tonnes in 2007-08 against 40.71 million tonnes in 2003-04," he said, adding that the total investment in steel sector would go up to Rs. 8.70 trillion (\$203 billion) in 2020.

The state-owned Steel Authority of India Limited's (SAIL) proposed Rs. 540 billion expansion plan is expected to boost its production capacity to

26.2 million tonnes by 2010 and 60 million tonnes in 2019-20. "The Ministry is committed to making SAIL a global player in all respects," said Paswan.

The consolidated profit before tax (PBT) of all public sector steel undertakings had increased to Rs. 206.24 billion in 2007-08 from Rs. 52.98 billion in 2003-04, he added. Regarding expansion and investment in the industry, Paswan said 193 memorandum of understandings (MoUs) have been signed by various states, including Orissa, Jharkhand, Karnataka, and Chhattisgarh, with total planned capacity of around 243 million tonnes and a proposed investment of over Rs. 5.14 trillion (\$120 billion).

"Many private companies want to set up steel plants in Orissa, Jharkhand and other states, but are yet to get adequate land and other facilities," Paswan said that there would be no scarcity of steel products in the country and the Inter Ministerial Group, constituted in July 2007, was coordinating and facilitating speedy implementation of steel investments across the country. —IANS

Steel SEZ in Tamil Nadu by 2010: SAIL chief

The special economic zone (SEZ) of the Steel Authority of India Limited at Salem in Tamil Nadu will be ready by 2010, S.K. Roongta, chairman of the state-owned steel giant, has said.

"It will be spread over an area of 230 acres of land, and will be ready by 2010," Roongta told reporters in New Delhi.

SAIL will provide land to the SEZ, and will offer customised steel products to prospective units that come up in the economic zone.

"These units will manufacture architectural facades, railway applications, dairy plants, chemical and pharmaceutical plants, machines for the food processing industry, tubes and pipes, auto components, panels for lifts, and so on," he said.

Bengaluru Intl' Airport is born



The much-awaited Bengaluru International Airport finally opened on May 23 to commercial operations, with an Air India Airbus A320 from Mumbai being the first to land at 22.37 p.m. carrying about 110 passengers and crew.

The much-awaited launch of the airport was put off thrice owing to delays in setting up the air traffic control, training operators, and government clearances.

The Rs. 25-billion (\$625 million) greenfield airport is situated at Devanahalli, about 40 km from India's IT hub. The Bengaluru International Airport is surrounded by greenery and farmlands, with the historic Nandi Hills

forming the backdrop. The new airport has been built in a record 36 months under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model to handle about 10-12 million passengers per annum till 2012.

The PPP consortium consists of the Unique Zurich Airport, Siemens Project Ventures and Larsen & Toubro as private promoters. The Airports Authority of India and Karnataka government are the state promoters.

With the opening of the new airport, the 50-year-old state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) airport in the city was shut for civilian traffic despite protests by corporate leaders against its closure. —IANS

Indian giant screens for European football stadiums

An Indian company, Technology Frontiers, is entering European football stadiums with giant and small screens, breaking the hold of European and American digital screen solution outfits on the market. The Rs. 280 million (\$7 million) Chennai-based company will shortly install its digital screens at four European football stadiums — two each in Romania and Poland.

"We will soon sign the contract with the football stadium authorities there. The contract value will be around \$2 million per stadium over a five-year period," said M.S. Muralidharan, managing director of the company.

"Talks are also on with three stadiums in Greece as also with an ice hockey association in North America for the screens," Muralidharan told *Indo-Asian News Service*.

"Overseas clients not only look at the robustness of the systems in performance but also at the aesthetics," he added.

Although a cricket-focused company, Technology Frontiers is now branching out into football.

The company was able to reach new frontiers thanks to the recently concluded Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket tournament. —IANS



Free open source software helps Indian techies in many projects

Free software and open source tools are helping a range of Indian entrepreneurs to build software solutions that enhance the potential of computing. With names like Hindawi, Zmanda and Dhvani or KDE Hindi, these products are helping an entire new generation of software developers.

Hindawi (hindawi.in) is a suite of open source programming languages. It allows people to write computer programmes in languages other than English.

The Zmanda Recovery Manager (zmanda.com) is a perl-based utility used to automate backup and recovery of MySQL databases. Prominent on its management team are Indian names like Chander Kant, Paddy Sreenivasa, Ram 'TK' Krishnamurthy, and K.K. George.

Dhvani (dhvani.sourceforge.net) is a text-to-speech Indian-language initiative and allows a Simputer to read what the user types. To use the Simputer, the user need not be literate and can do without English language skills. Using images in conjunction with voice output in local languages makes a computing device accessible to a larger section of the Indian population. Other winners are Fedora Spins, and KDE Hindi of indlinux.org.

MayaVi (mayaVi.sourceforge.net) is an open source tool that allows interactive three-dimensional visualisation of data.

In 2000, Prabhu Ramachandran, then a IIT-Madras aerospace engineering student, started work on the MayaVi project with his colleagues to visualise computational flu-

id dynamics data. "Popular tools available for the purpose at that time were proprietary and prohibitively expensive," noted the Linux *For You* magazine, published from Delhi, which has announced its FOSS (Free and Open Source Software) India Awards for those involved in a "saga of innovation".

Peter Thomas of Satyam worked on JTrac (jtrac.info), a FOSS "issue-tracking web application". JTrac is a computer software package which manages and maintains lists of issues, as needed by an organisation. It can create, update and resolve reported customer issues.

Abhas Abhinav's DeepRoot Linux team has developed deepOfix (deeproot.in/deepofix), which "gives many proprietary mail servers a run for their money", said Linux For You.

Another of the Indian winners was Tux Type — into which five students of the Government Engineering College at Thrissur built Unicode Malayalam support. This made TuxType (tuxtype.sourceforge.net) the first FOSS typing tutor to bundle Unicode support for Indian languages, at a time when Indian language solutions in computing is eagerly awaited, so that the potential across the country can be better tapped.

WANem (wanem.sourceforge.net) is a wide area network (WAN) emulator, from the Tata Consultancy Services. Other WAN emulators were hardware-based, expensive and available to only a select few in test labs. —IANS

Saudi Arabia to procure rice from India

Saudi Arabia has requested Indian authorities to lift the ban on rice exports to the Gulf nation following shortage of the commodity in the country.

"The Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry has been touch with Indian officials on the issue of rice imports," Rajeev Shahare, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Indian Embassy in Riyadh, told the *Arab News* newspaper.

"Moreover, the whole issue of Indian rice exports to the Kingdom was discussed at length when Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman of India's Planning Commission, visited the kingdom (earlier in May)," he said.

One of the top rice buyers in the world, Saudi Arabia imports about 625,000 tonnes of basmati annually, of which 575,000 tonnes come from India alone.

In April, during a visit to Dubai,



India's Commerce Minister Kamal Nath said that rice production was below par in India and that action would be taken only when it became normal.

When it was pointed out that the 1.56 million expatriate Indian community in the Gulf was suffering because of the ban on export of rice, he told reporters: "We are awaiting the next crop and we will soon discuss the matter internally."

India had banned exports of all non-basmati rice in March 2008 to meet domestic demand.

'Inflation will come down in a few months'

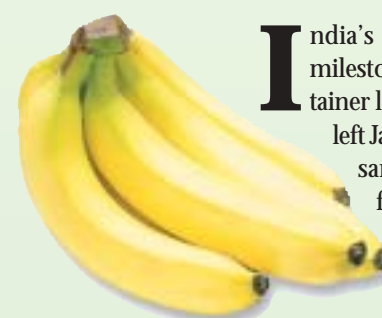
Asserting that inflation was a "short-term concern" and "will come down in a few months", Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia on May 21 said a 9 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth target for the next five years was attainable.

"Over five years, a 9 percent GDP growth target is not unreasonable. Over 8 percent growth is expected in the current fiscal. India is moving towards higher growth rate against all constraints," Ahluwalia said at an interactive session on 'India Inc — 2020' organised by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham).

Describing inflation, which has risen considerably recently, as a short-term concern but legitimate concern, Ahluwalia said prices of commodities would be moderated in a few months.



Indian banana sets sail for Saudi Arabia



India's banana exports crossed a new milestone early last month when a container load of the fruit bound for Jeddah left Jaghadiya in Gujarat. About a thousand farmers, who produced the fruit on a contract basis for Desai Fruits and Vegetables Pvt. Ltd (DFV), cheered as the 18-tonne special reefer container moved out from the company's cold storage complex. The consignment was sent as part of a multi million-dollar contract signed with Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Adallah Sharbatly Co. Ltd.

"This is in effect the 51st container which is going. The previous 50 containers were sent on a trial basis," said P.K. Khandelwal, CEO of DFV.

Bananas were till now exported through merchant exporters and this is the first time a container load was shipped out.

The company plans to despatch container loads of fruits

to seven more countries within a month. With this, India will join Latin American countries and the Philippines in the Far East as a global supplier of bananas.

A large retailer in India has approached DFV for the supply of premium quality bananas at a good price. This will be finalised in the next two months.

India is the largest producer of bananas in the world with 23 percent of the global production, which is estimated at 72.5 million tonnes a year. Brazil, China, Ecuador and Philippines are the other major producers. Bananas are the developing world's fourth-most important commodity and rank first as a commonly eaten fruit.

DFV, founded in 2001 by Ajit Desai, a Gujarat farmer, pioneered the export of bananas from India. With earnings of over \$750,000 in 2006-07, the company has become India's largest banana exporter. DFV's 2007 turnover was close to \$8 million. The company's equity holding is in the nature of 80:20. While 80 percent is owned by Contract Farming India, a firm based in Zug, Switzerland, Desai owns 20 percent. —IANS

Adlabs launches India's first 6-D movie screen

Adlabs Cinema has launched India's first six-dimension (6-D) movie screen at Agra, where cutting edge technology would provide a multi-sensory cinematic experience as never experienced by the audience.

Explaining the 6-D cinema concept, Adlabs Cinema's chief operating officer Tushar Dhingra said that the new theatre's technology employs cutting-edge visual and audio effects that allows the audience to simultaneously experience sight, sound, smell, touch, motion and even interact with the characters.

Part of the Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group, the 6-D theatre — in collaboration with Cinema Park Networks — is located near the Taj Mahal. In the 6-D theatre, two digital video players play simultaneously and project a 3-D film on the screen. The visitors sit on Smart Motion Seats that move around, have bass shakers and

multiple ticklers. Viewers also experience special effects, such as breeze, water spray and smoke.

In the Interactive Theatre, which is the first ever interactive cinema theatre in the world, each viewer holds a wireless remote, enabling them to participate in a trivia game about the theme of the film.

An introductory special 30-minute film called 'India In Motion' has been shot where actor Anupam Kher takes the audiences through India's evolution from an ancient civilisation to a modern nation.

With the 6-D screen, the Cinema Park Network puts Agra on an impressive list of destinations worldwide that host this attraction. Their 450 projects include cities like Jerusalem, Rome, Baltimore, Athens, Warsaw, Tel Aviv, Orlando, Mexico and Sweden.

Adlabs is India's largest cinema chain with 163 screens across 63 cinemas across the country. —IANS

UK-India submarine cable in 2010

Bharti Airtel and 15 other leaders of the global telecommunications industry have signed a deal to build the first, high-bandwidth optical-fibre undersea cable system from Britain to India.

The 700 million-pound Europe India Gateway (EIG) cable system is expected to "significantly enhance capacity and diversity" between the countries of three continents, the EIG consortium said.

Sixteen telecommunications companies are investing in the project — AT&T, Bharti Airtel, BT, Cable &

Wireless, Djibouti Telecom, Du, Gibtelecom, IAM, Libyan Post, Telecom and Information Technology Company, MTN Group Ltd, Omantel, PT Comunicacoes S.A., Saudi Telecom Company, Telecom Egypt, Telkom SA Ltd and Verizon Business.

The 15,000-km cable system, expected to be operational in the second quarter of 2010, will connect Asia, Africa and Europe.

The EIG cable system will also provide seamless interconnection with other major cable systems connecting

Europe, Africa, Asia and North America.

Thirteen landings have been planned along the cable's route: Britain, Portugal, Gibraltar, Morocco, Monaco, France, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Oman, United Arab Emirates and India.

The system will utilise state-of-the-art next-generation technology designed to provide up to 3.84 terabits per second (Tbps) upgradeable transmission facilities that will support internet, e-commerce, video, data and voice services. —IANS

BRIC: India tops services growth confidence

The confidence of a robust growth in the services sector is the highest in India among the four BRIC countries including Brazil, Russia and China, with none of the 1,400 respondents of a survey by a global consultancy anticipating any drop in revenues.

"Confidence was highest in the Indian service sector. Around 60 percent of firms expect a rise in activity while none expects a decline," according to the findings of KPMG, released in New Delhi last month.

The respondents of the Indian service sector also expect the growth in activity to be supported by a strong rise in volumes of new business with 56 percent of all companies forecasting an increase in new work.

Revenues are also set to rise

markedly, underpinned by increased marketing activity, the introduction of new products and entry into new markets, says the survey.

Approximately 38 percent of companies stated that the availability of credit had improved where as, only around eight percent of firms noted deterioration in credit availability, compared to the situation prior to the financial market turmoil last summer.

Just two percent reported that their business was being constrained as a result.

"The buoyant confidence in the BRIC service sector suggests that rapid economic expansion is set to be maintained in 2008 and into 2009," said Ian Gomes, chairman of KPMG's New and Emerging Markets Group.

'Indian firms created 5,000 jobs in Britain in 2007'



Seventy Indian companies set up in Britain 2007-08, created 5,000 more jobs, Britain's Trade and Investment Minister Lord Digby Jones said. Trade between India and Britain grew by 9.1 percent during the financial year, adding around 9 billion pounds to the total value, Lord Jones told a gathering of British investors in London last month. In a speech to business executives at the India Investors Summit, the British minister also welcomed Indian High

Commissioner Shiv Shankar Mukherjee's statement that the economic reforms process in India was "irreversible".

However, Jones stressed that the speed of reforms was also "crucial".

"We have seen our commercial relationship blossom at both ends of the spectrum — from Tata's takeover of Jaguar and Land Rover in my home town of Birmingham to the smaller end with the U.K. India Business Angels Network bringing together entrepreneurs and venture capitalists from both countries," Lord Jones said.

The minister added that British expertise and business were well placed to bag contracts that would follow on from increased investments in infrastructure — expected to be in the region of \$500 billion over the next five years. —IANS

Corporate Snippets

Ficci predicts 16% growth
With growing demand for higher lifestyle category products and increased affordability, the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry is poised to clock a 16 percent growth in sales during 2008-09 compared to 14.5 percent in the last fiscal, an industry body has forecast.

The survey conducted by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) predicts the value-added and aspirational products that spurred the sector growth last year would drive the growth further in fiscal 2008-09. The survey covered about 28 consumer goods items.

Mumbai firm to develop SEZ

Mumbai-based infrastructure development company SKIL signed an agreement on May 21 with the Government of Oman and the Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands to develop a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) near the port of Sohar in Oman.

The Oman government and the Port of Rotterdam had signed an agreement in 2007 to expand the Sohar port area from 2,000 hectares to 6,300 hectares to include the 4,300-hectare SEZ. The Sohar SEZ is expected to be operational the fourth quarter of 2008.

Tata to launch world truck

Tata Motors will launch their world truck, simultaneously in India and South Korea, in June, said company's managing director Ravi Kant in Mumbai on May 28.

The world truck would be fitted with 200-500 horsepower (hp) engines and will be replacing the existing range of 100-180 hp trucks.

The launch will be followed with other new variants in both passenger and commercial vehicles.



London

UK gets first Indian-origin woman Lord Mayor

success as this year marks the 800th anniversary of the creation of the Lord Mayor's office in the city of Leicester, home to between 72,000 and 90,000 people of Indian origin.

Sood, who moved from Punjab to join her husband in Leicester in 1970, told a glittering ceremony that it was a "great honour for me to represent the city".

Manjula Sood, an Indian-born councillor, made history by becoming the first Indian woman to be made a Lord Mayor in Britain — appropriately, in a city dubbed Little India.

Although the post is largely ceremonial — unlike that of the elected mayor — it marks an Indian's

"This year will be an historic time for Leicester in many ways, and I am really looking forward to doing all I can to promote what's going on here, across the world," she said.

Sood first became a Leicester city councillor in October 1996, for Latimer ward, after working as a school teacher for nearly 20 years.

She was inspired to take up the role following the loss of her husband Paul Sood, who had been the councillor for that ward until his death in May 1996. Last year, she became the first Asian woman to join the city council's cabinet, where she took on the new portfolio of Health and Well-being.

She is also a member of the Leicester Council of Faiths, and a governor at Leicester College. And she recently joined a national task force for black, Asian and ethnic minority women formed by British minister Harriet Harman. According to Britain's 2001 census, 26 percent of Leicester's 280,000 population is of Indian origin.

Rushdie tipped to win Best of Booker, voting on

Bookmakers have named Indian-born novelist Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* as the favourite to win the Best of Booker award after organisers announced a shortlist of six novels dominated by postcolonial themes.



includes the knighthood, is a British citizen, India continues to be the dominant theme of his novels — and none more than the celebrated *Midnight's Children*, based around the partition of India.

Midnight's Children won the only other celebratory award created for the Booker — the 25th anniversary Booker of Bookers in 1993.

Now 15 years on, William Hill has offered Rushdie 6/4 odds as the favourite to win again.

Victoria Gendinning, a British novelist who chaired the shortlisting panel, said: "It was a great experience, revisiting all the Booker and Man Booker Prize winners, and very tough arriving at the shortlist — but we really feel that the six novels we picked represent the best fiction-writing of the past 40 years and that each one of them will stand the test of time.



Ranger wins Pride of India Award

NRI industrialist Rami Ranger has been given the Pride of India Award for his contributions to British business and industry. The award, presented by India's then Acting High Commissioner Asoke Mukerji, recognised Ranger's successful trading business, Sun Oil Ltd, which exports grocery items to 62 countries including India.

As well as representing top MNCs such as Unilever, Nestle, Mcvities, Beechams, Mars and Cadburys, Sun Oil also produces its own range of products.

Other recipients of the award include actress Ayesha Dharker, Lord Khalid Hameed, CEO of Cromwell Hospital and C.B. Patel, publisher and editor of *Asian Voice*.

Sepia Tribute

Komagata Maru apology amid 'Bole So Nihal' slogans

Vancouver

Amid shouts of "Bole So Nihal", Canada's British Columbia provincial assembly in Victoria city formally apologised for the Komagata Maru tragedy involving immigrants from India 94 years ago.

The Komagata Maru was a Japanese ship that was hired by a wealthy Sikh, Gurdit Singh (from Malay, now Malaysia), to bring 376 Indians to Vancouver from Hong Kong to challenge Canada's racist "continuous journey" policy of that time. Under that policy, only those immigrants could enter Canada who came directly from India without breaking journey. Since there were no direct shipping connections between India and Canada at that time, Indians could not enter Canada because they had to break their journey in Hong Kong to catch another ship. The Komagata Maru passengers were not allowed to land and forcibly sent back to India two months later. On their arrival

in then Calcutta, 21 immigrants were killed by British Indian police and many hanged later.

On May 23, as about a hundred Indo-Canadian leaders and the South Asian media gathered in the assembly gallery to watch the proceedings, ruling Liberal Party House leader Mike de Jong introduced the motion offering an apology to the Indo-Canadian community. "During the 70-minute debate, 18 legislators from the ruling Liberal party and the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) spoke about the racist treatment of Komagata passengers," legislator Jagrup Brar told *Indo-Asian News Service* on phone from Victoria.

The House leader introduced the apology motion, reading: "The House deeply regrets that the passengers, who sought refuge in our country and our province, were turned away without benefit of the fair and impartial treatment befitting a society where people of all cultures are welcomed and accepted."

Stoking love of Bollywood in Germany...

Vienna

When Naseem B. Khan stepped out of university campus with a degree in business management, he was delighted to discover that Germany was bonkers about Bollywood.

It did not take long for this German, born of Gujarati parents, to combine his own love for Indian cinema with an adventurous career in publishing. Wasting little time on "ifs and buts", Khan founded the Ishq Publishing Group in Dinslaken, an industrial town near Dusseldorf and in 2006 launched a Bollywood lifestyle magazine with the same name in the German language. At first, he printed 5,000 copies of *Ishq* and today he rolls out 30,000 copies per month. This is a daring venture in Germany, a country of about 82.5 million people and 33 million households, out of which 98 percent have at least one television set.

Khan, who looks more like a film star than a publisher, spoke to *Indo-Asian News Service* about the craving for lit-



erature on different aspects of Bollywood like the biographies of stars in the German language.

Germany boasts of a buoyant magazine sector with nearly 900 general magazines and over a thousand specialised periodicals already in the market and is second only to Britain where more books are sold than anywhere else.

Khan's calculation was simple. He studied surveys that said three million people watched the first Bollywood film aired on the small screen by RTL II, a German entertainment channel in 2004. The Hindi blockbuster 'Kabhi Khushi, Kabhi Gham' was screened at prime time and the response was so encouraging that RTL scheduled 'Kal Ho Naa Ho', 'Main Hoon Na' and 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai' soon after. Overnight Shahrukh Khan, who stars in all these films, became a household name here. As payback to viewers, Bollywood films were dubbed into German for the next set of screenings.

What *Ishq* does is to facilitate German fans to follow an entire lifestyle as popularised by Bollywood.



NRIs prepare white paper on one-horned rhino



Houston

Assamese NRIs in the U.S. who remain concerned over increasing incidents of rhino poaching in their native state are preparing a white paper on the one-horned rhinoceros.

"We think volumes have been written and spoken about the ineffectiveness of the present measures to protect the rhinos in Kaziranga National Park and other sites. Now it is time to

act," Rajen Barua, chief office-bearer of the Friends of Assam & Seven Sisters (FASS) with its headquarters in Houston, Texas, told *Indo-Asian News Service*. He said the initiative would give an overall historical perspective on the animal and the present state of affairs on the sensitive issue of rhino poaching. It would also give recommendations with the objective of saving the endangered creature.

The FASS has been consistently raising its voice for a credible and high-level inquiry into the killings of rhinos, and has demanded disciplinary action against the officials and individuals responsible for failing to protect the animals.

The organisation, in a statement issued from Houston in March, had insisted that "since the Assam government had failed miserably in its duties, the administration of Kaziranga should immediately be placed under the army for the time being with strict orders to treat the poachers as terrorists".

Eight-year-old Indian American boy spells history

Sriram Hathwar, an eight-year-old Indian American boy, has become the youngest speller in the history of the Scripps National Spelling Bee even as he failed to go too far in the popular contest. But nine other of the 30 Indian American participants made it to the semi finals of the 83-year-old competition by spelling words like "leptocercal", "bizarrerie" and "trochophore".

Indian kids have dominated the event in recent years, winning the championship five times in the last nine years. The last Indian winner was Anurag Kashyap in 2005, correctly spelling "appoggiatura".

The nine Indian kids among 45

spellers advancing to the Semifinals were: Easun Arunachalam (steeve), Arushi Jauhari (leptocercal), Shiva Kangeyan (ozostomia), Vaibhav Vavilala (luftmensch), Sameer Mishra (quadrat), Kavya Shivashankar (bizarrerie), Akshat Shekhar (monophthalmic), Sidharth Chand (purslane) and Jahnvi Iyer (trochophore).

In all, 288 children in the 8-15 age group from across America, Canada and eight other countries qualified for the gruelling two-day competition, but only 63 made it to the quarter finals. In the preliminary rounds, Sriram quickly nailed the word judges gave him, barely pausing between letters.

6 PIOs chosen for Ellis Island awards

Six Indian Americans, including three doctors and three entrepreneurs, have been chosen for the Ellis Island Medal of Honour for 2008, given to U.S. citizens of diverse origins for their outstanding contributions to their own ethnic groups, their countries of origin, and to the U.S.

The six Indian Americans to receive the medal were Sampat S. Shivangi, obstetrician-gynaecologist; Dhiraj H. Shah, retired radiologist; Bhupendra Patel, ophthalmic plastic and facial cosmetic surgeon; and entrepreneurs Mukesh Patel, Nadadur Vardhan and Pamela Kwatra.

Indian American head of cardiology body

An Indian American has taken over as president of the American Society of Geriatric Cardiology, becoming the first Asian to head the 22-year-old organisation based in Washington. Navin C. Nanda, 65, professor of medicine and director of the Heart Station & Echocardiography Labs at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, intends to take initiatives during his one-year term to fulfill the society's mission of reducing the burden of cardiovascular disease in older people.

PIO boy wins National Geographic contest

An 11-year-old Indian American boy won the 2008 National Geographic Bee contest, taking home a \$25,000 college scholarship and a lifetime membership. Akshay Rajagopal, a grade six student from Lincoln, Nebraska, emerged winner at the contest held in Washington for students from fifth through eighth grades, aged 10 to 14.

Nearly five million students take part in the National Geographic Bee contest each year.

Indian American brings Internet election campaigning to India

Los Angeles/New Delhi

If Ravi Singh, CEO of one of America's first internet electioneering sites, has his way, Indian political parties will be campaigning on the web in the next round of elections. With nearly 640 campaigners signing up with it in the U.S. in 2007, ElectionMall TM Technologies, Singh's brainchild, is creating waves in the world of political campaigning. Especially in the heat of the presidential elections there this year.

Globally, internet campaigning is a \$75 billion market. In the U.S. alone, it is a \$9.8 billion market. "The idea of political campaigning using technology, the internet, signifies a paradigm shift. And it's working. Through the

internet, not only is there a greater outreach to people but voters also have a wide choice at their fingertips in deciding whom to cast their votes for," Washington-based Singh told *Indo-Asian News Service*.

Singh, who keeps shuttling to and from Los Angeles, is in India to emulate a similar module and has invested \$2 million in his ventures here. India's general election is to be held next year. "I was 25 when I decided to join politics in the U.S. but failed to make a mark. My failure made me realise the disadvantages while campaigning, the loopholes of being unable to reach across to the people. That's when I developed ElectionMall in 1999 with just one computer. Today, it's recognised as one of the industry pioneers and people call me a campaign guru!" the 35-year-old said.

Indian American named to US body on terrorism

Washington

A leading Indian American lawyer, Rahul 'Richard' Verma, has been appointed to a U.S. Congressional Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism. Verma, who was Senior National Security Advisor to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, is currently a partner with Steptoe & Johnson LLP, a top international law firm in Washington. "There's probably no more important security challenge facing our country than keeping weapons of mass destruction out

of the hands of terrorists," Verma said on his appointment to the commission set up on the recommendation of the independent, bipartisan 9/11 Commission.

"Hopefully, the work of the commission will help guide the new Congress and administration in this key area," he said.

The commission will assess current American activities, initiatives, and programmes aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism while providing a clear, comprehensive strategy with concrete recommendations to achieve this crucial goal.

Dalip Singh bust unveiled in Delhi



The American dream is alive and shining. A bust of Dalip Singh Saund, the first Indian-American elected to the House of Representatives, now adorns the American Center library in the heart of the Indian capital.

The bust of Saund, an iconic figure for Indian and Asian immigrants to the U.S., was installed in the American Center library May 7 to inspire all those who continue to look at the U.S. as a land of opportunity.

Mauritian civil servant finds Indian roots

Bhubaneswar

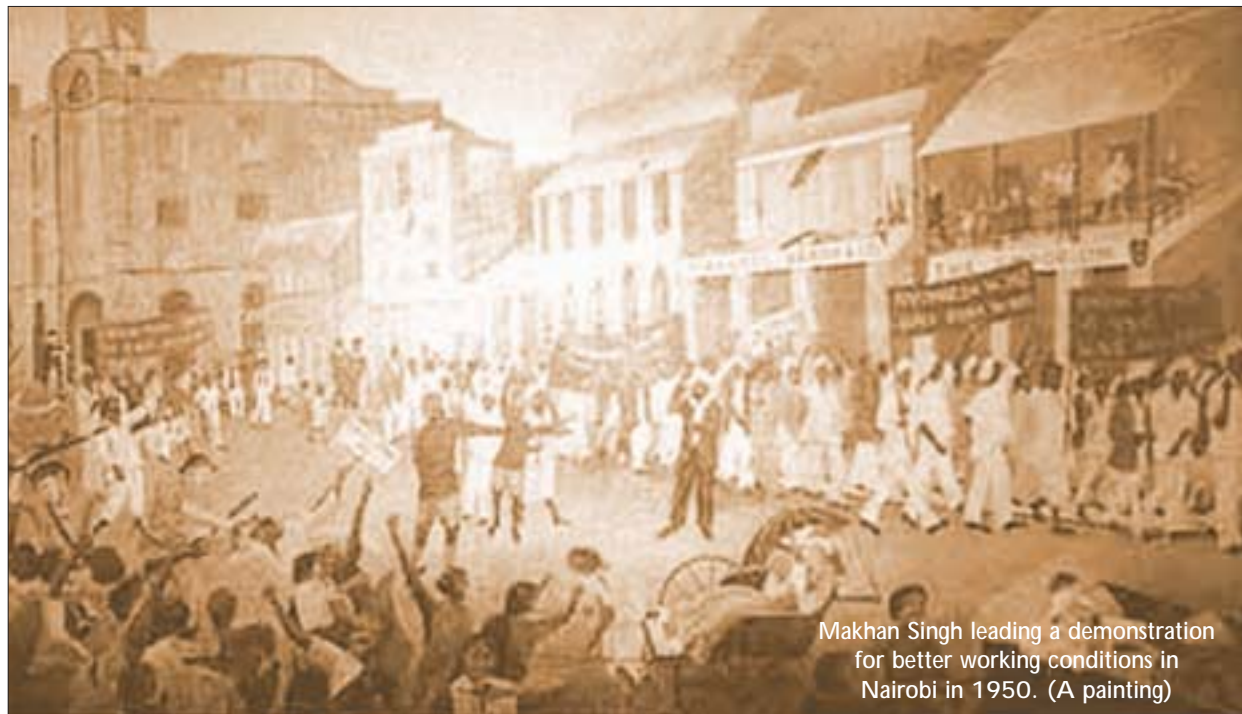
A Mauritian civil servant has discovered that his great great grandfather was an Indian — in all likelihood from Orissa — and was brought to Mauritius as indentured worker over 135 years ago. Ramroop Jugurnauth, 47, is a civil servant in the Human Resource cadre in the Ministry of Civil Service of

Mauritius. "My great great grandfather, Juggurnauth Immigrant No.352036 (this is how indentured workers were all identified), came to Mauritius as an indentured worker in 1870. I have been interested in my roots since my childhood when I usually heard my grandfather speak about his family," Jugurnauth told *Indo-Asian News Service*. "I carried out research at the Immigration Archives

in Mauritius and found that they came to Mauritius in 1870 as indentured labourer from a village called Jajpore in the district of Cuttack," he said.

When slavery was abolished, the then British rulers had to find ways and means to sustain development of the island for their own interests. So they took recourse to indentured labour from India, which was also a British colony at that time, he said.

A forgotten son of India and Kenya



Makhan Singh leading a demonstration for better working conditions in Nairobi in 1950. (A painting)

Makhan Singh, an unsung Sikh hero of the Kenyan independence struggle, and largely forgotten today, was the founder of East African trade union movement.



Makhan Singh

Makhan Singh was an Indian-born labour union leader who is credited with laying the foundations of trade unionism in Kenya. He was born in Gharjakh, a village in British-ruled India's Gujranwala district, a Sikh-majority area in the province of Punjab (since 1947, his native region has been part of Pakistan). In 1927, at the age of 13, he moved with his family to Nairobi, a municipality which, since 1905, had functioned as the administrative capital of the British East African protectorate.

In 1935, he formed the Labour Trade Union of Kenya and, in 1949 he and Fred Kubai formed the East African Trade Union Congress, the first central organisation of trade unions in Kenya. Trade unionism was not the only activity in which Makhan Singh took such a keen interest; he was also one of the spearheads in attempting to relieve Kenya from the yoke of colonialism and advance it towards full freedom. On April 23, 1950, in an impassioned speech at the Kaloleni Hall, he urged that the time had come for the people to unite and to



Makhan Singh in Nairobi, January 1950

demand in a single voice that the country was theirs and that no foreign power had the right to rule over it. He set the ball rolling for eventual independence.

After having spoken out in clear and strong terms against British occupation and colonial rule in Kenya, Singh was soon arrested on May 15. At a trial in Nyeri, Chanan Singh (later Justice Chanan Singh) defended him eloquently and with rigour. He was acquitted.

But what distinguished Makhan Singh from many legendary leaders was that he went out of his way to bring together all the races in his politics.

He refused to accept a trade union movement segregated by race and poisoned by the colonial apartheid that classified black Africans and Asians in a humiliating hierarchy.

He demonstrated, for the first time in colonised Kenya, that Asians and black Africans were bound by the same fate and that their liberation was inextricably linked.

This was a challenge to all communities that made up Kenya, not just Kenyan South Asians, to come together and see what united them rather than what separated them and work together for a truly proper multi-racial and multi-cultural future. This quiet, unassuming man had a will of steel and a mission to fight for social justice for all Kenyans irrespective of colour, tribe, race, creed or religion.

In the late 1950s, Makhan Singh was detained for ten years in the desert prison camp near Lodwar, Northern Kenya, under the "control orders" issued by the British rulers of Kenya colony, echoing both the Guantanamo Bay and Belmarsh Prison detentions of 2000.

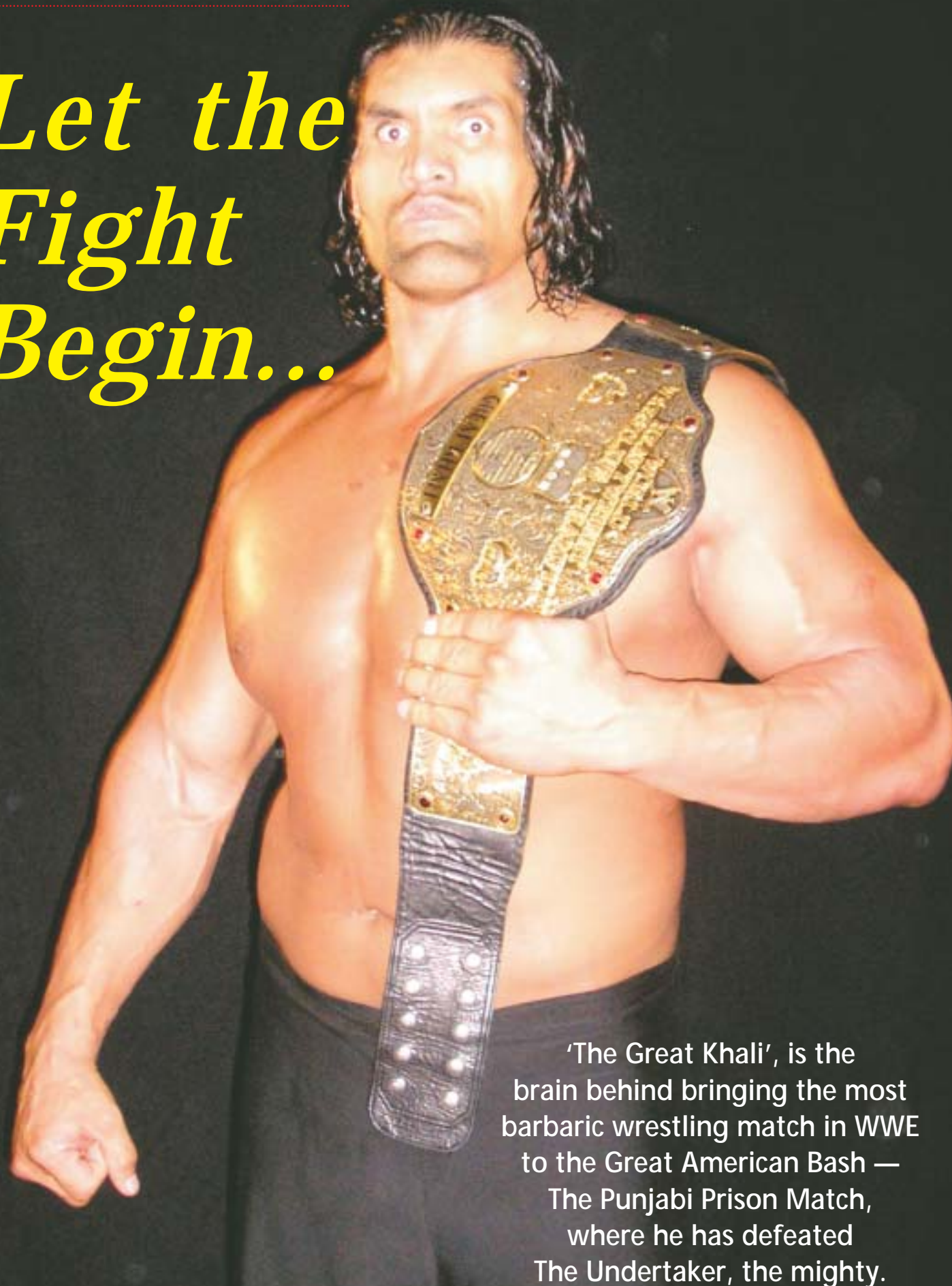
Like the Belmarsh prisoners and their detentions in Britain, the then Kenya Colony governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, ordered that Makhan Singh be detained for an indefinite period. He was released after ten years of being confined without any charge or trial on October 20, 1961. He died of a heart attack in Nairobi at the age of 59.



Makhan Singh with Jomo Kenyatta (first Prime Minister (1963–1964) and President (1964–1978) of Kenya).

What distinguished Makhan Singh from many leaders was that he went out of his way to bring together all the races in his politics. He refused to accept a trade union movement segregated by race and poisoned by the colonial apartheid that classified black Africans and Asians in a humiliating hierarchy.

Let the Fight Begin...



'The Great Khali', is the brain behind bringing the most barbaric wrestling match in WWE to the Great American Bash — The Punjabi Prison Match, where he has defeated The Undertaker, the mighty.



The Great Khali in India with fans



The Great Khali at a WWE fight

He is 7 feet 3 inches tall and weighs 190 kg. Clad in a white summer shirt straining at the 63-inch chest, the 'Great Khali', an Indian professional wrestler who is the current rage on the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) television shows, lives up to his name. He is the current world No. 1 after clinching the World Heavyweight Champion's title at the Great American Bash, a live wrestling series on television, in 2007.

Seated at the head of a conference table at the Oberoi Hotel in New Delhi, he looks like Goliath. Matted locks fall like a curtain round his massive shoulder and his square jaws flare at the chin to give him the look of a giant. But the man, who twice put on the mat 'The Undertaker', one of the most vicious fighters on the WWE team, lights up when someone mentions his childhood. And he has a message for the kids. "Tell your children at home not to try to wrestle like the way I do on screen. They should not emulate me because it might harm them. Wrestling is a tough sport," the wrestler told *Indo-Asian News Service*.

The Great Khali, born Dalip Singh Rana in Dhirana village in Himachal Pradesh, was in India for three weeks recently. He has a busy schedule promoting Ten Sports, with which he has tied up, other than meeting people and the media.

The US-based wrestler is the brain behind bringing the most barbaric wrestling match in WWE to the Great American Bash — The Punjabi Prison Match, where he defeated The Undertaker. Khali has fought several big names in the ring like Funaki of SmackDown (a wrestling show), world champion Rey Mysterio, Tommy Dreamer, John Cena and Shawn Michaels.

"Wrestling and body building are good career choices today for the Indian youth, provided they learn from professionals and follow a strict discipline," he said.

He felt that government bodies were not doing enough to promote the sport. "I personally cannot do much to promote wrestling in India despite the fact it is a traditional sport. I am hardly left with time for anything else after my professional commitments. At the most, I can call a couple of kids over to the US and train them," he said. But youngsters, said Khali, were not serious about physically demanding sport these days. "They mostly want to work and do not want to wrestle because the training process is time-taking. I had to spend a lot of time on the sport."

Khali, who has liked jousting ever since he was child, was spotted at the age of 15 by a senior Punjab police official who encourages him to join the force as a constable at Jalandhar under the sports quota. Khali, a former Mr. India (1995 and 1996), moved to the US in 2000 with the help of his family, friends and the Punjab Police. However, he has no plans of leaving his job in the force even as he continues to live abroad.

Khali was a body-builder and an accomplished boxer before he took to professional wrestling. He made his first appearance in the American ring under the name Giant Singh at the All Pro-Wrestling in 2000 and made his WWE debut in 2006. The WWE fighter is known for his finishing and signature moves known as the "Khali bomb" and the "Khali vice grip". "But my most memorable fight is the tie for the World Heavyweight Champion's crown in 2007, where I fought 20 giants for the top slot," he said.

He was born to Jwala Ram and Tandi Devi and is one of seven siblings. Singh married Harminder Kaur in 2002.

Khali follows a simple fitness routine. "I eat four meals a day, may be a little more than normal folks. It's mostly vegetarian, and I work out for two hours." He avoids fat, sugar and oil. Khali took on the ringname 'The Great Khali' after the fierce Hindu goddess Kali.

Khali was spotted at the age of 15 by a senior Punjab police official. He joined the force as a constable at Jalandhar under the sports quota. Khali, a former 'Mr. India', moved to the US in 2000 but says has no plans to quit the police force.

On the fringes of India's border with Pakistan is the vast marshland called Kutch in the western state of Gujarat — a wasteland of breathtaking beauty that is home to a hardy, creative people who are not only rewriting rules of gender and hierarchy but have made it the region with the highest density of craftspeople anywhere in the country.

Often called "Nature's most hated child", Kutch never fails to amaze visitors with its dried wells and arid beauty. A vast swathe of the 45,612 km district with 966 villages forms the Rann of Kutch, the great salt marsh.

Geological evidence cites that the Arabian Sea scooped out massive hollows of brine in the region that mingled with the arid topography to form intermittent salt flats that broadened inland into a shallow arid basin. It is said Kutch was once under water. As one travels through Kutch, the dry grass and sparse crop of castor seeds and peanuts give way to the pristine white deserts of the Rann of Kutch.

Somewhere en route to the last village in the region, Kaladungar, which is nearly 120 km from the town called Bhuj, a strange sight captivates. The endless white desert that stretches

into the horizon suddenly seems to melt into the sky to form a plain sheet.

"This sight baffles everyone. It's amazing isn't it? Pity, one cannot do full justice to it with cameras. The best of the best have tried, the Discovery channel and the National Geographic to name a few, but everyone failed," said Pavitrans Vittal, an official in the state tourism department.

Kutch is a survivor, it has stood the test of time since the Jurassic age when dinosaurs roamed its desolate terrain and the first civilisation fanned out along an ancient delta at the mouth of the Kutch basin. Archaeologists have discovered the biggest Harappan civilisation site in a village called Kuran in the Pachcham island of Kutch.

Located strategically along the India-Pakistan border, Kutch has survived two skirmishes with Pakistan and several earthquakes, including one that almost razed the town of Bhuj. But hardships have tempered Kutch with steel.

It is one of the upcoming tourist destinations in the state. For more than a decade now, the Rann Utsav, an annual cultural festival, has been luring tourists with three-day packages that include tent homes, camel cart rides on full moon nights and outdoor soirees of traditional Kutchi and Gujarati folk arts. "The desert almost comes alive on the full moon night with the colours of ethnic Gujarat," says a senior tourism official. The crowd is a mix of Indian and foreigners.

The Gujarat government is planning to celebrate the festival next year in a bigger way to increase the number of footfalls in the state and build a fossil park following the discovery of dinosaur fossils in Kaladungar.

Another rural tourism project, Shaam-e-Sarhad, gives tourists a feel of rural Kutch. It remains packed with visitors



between October and March, the best time to visit Kutch.

A striking feature in the villages of the region is the attire of the people. The Kutchi people love adorning themselves in bright and colourful outfits with lots of mirror work, and ample heavy jewellery. Kutch prides itself in its tradition of crafts and embroidery like Kharek, Paako, Rabaari and Mutuwa; and not surprisingly has the highest density of craftspeople in the country. The embroidery, mostly done by the women, maintains the gender balance at home. "We take equal part in household decisions with our husbands," said 20-year-old weaver Natha Behn in her tiny home in Ludiya village. "It takes me a month to make a *kanjari* (long blouse), complete with the embroidery and the mirror work. It costs me about Rs. 200 (approximately \$5) and I sell it for about three times more. I also make bags, blankets, dolls, cushion covers and other items," Natha Behn told *Indo-Asian News Service*.

Kutch is a storehouse of treasures. A hill in Kaladungar has become the latest hunting ground for archaeologists who have discovered fossil remains of dinosaurs in the region. Atanu Chakrabarty, secretary of the state's tourism and small-scale industries department, said numerous dinosaur fossils have been found in the region. The Geological Survey of India (GSI) and the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have authenticated them.

"The fossilised eggs of dinosaurs and their body, embedded in rocks, were discovered in the hills of Kaladungar and they have been authenticated by the GSI and ZSI officials. It dates back to 65 million years ago," Chakrabarty said. Plans, still at a preliminary stage, are on to develop the place into a dinosaur fossil park.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

AINA MAHAL: Built in the 18th century, it was the palace

THREATS TO WETLANDS

India has a wealth of wetland ecosystems. Most of the wetlands in India are directly or indirectly linked with major river systems such as the Ganges, Cauvery, Krishna, Godavari and Tapti.

However, the Wildlife Institute of India's survey reveals that 70-80 percent of individual freshwater marshes and lakes in the Gangetic flood plains have been lost in the last five decades. At present, only 50 percent of India's wetlands remain. Among the major factors that have seriously affected India's wetlands are:

Urbanisation: Wetlands near urban centres are under increasing developmental pressure for residential, industrial and commercial facilities. Urban wetlands are essential for preserving public water supplies.

Anthropogenic activities: Due to unplanned urban and agricultural development, industries, road construction, impoundment, resource extraction and dredge disposal, wetlands have been drained and transformed, causing substantial economic and ecological losses.

Agricultural activities: Following the Green Revolution of the 1970s, vast stretches of wetlands have been converted to paddy fields. Construction of a large number of reservoirs, canals and dams to provide for irrigation significantly altered the hydrology of the wetlands.

Hydrologic activities: Construction of canals and diversion of streams and rivers to transport water to lower arid regions for irrigation has altered the drainage pattern and significantly degraded the wetlands of the region.

Deforestation: Removal of vegetation in the catchments leads to soil erosion and siltation.

Pollution: Unrestricted dumping of sewage and toxic chemicals from industries has polluted many freshwater wetlands.

Aquaculture: Demand for shrimps and fishes have provided economic incentives to convert wetlands and mangrove forests to develop pisciculture and aquaculture ponds.

Introduced species: Indian wetlands are threatened by exotic introduced plant species such as water hyacinth and salvinia. They clog waterways and compete with native vegetation.

Climate change: Rising air temperatures, shifts in precipitation, increasing frequency of storms, droughts and floods, rising atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration, and sea-level rise also affect the wetlands.

of Maharao Lakhpatji. Now a museum, it has a Hall of Mirrors. As the name suggests, the white marble walls of the palace are covered with mirrors. Adding to the glitter are gilded ornaments embedded in the walls. The Mahal houses some of the most rare idols.

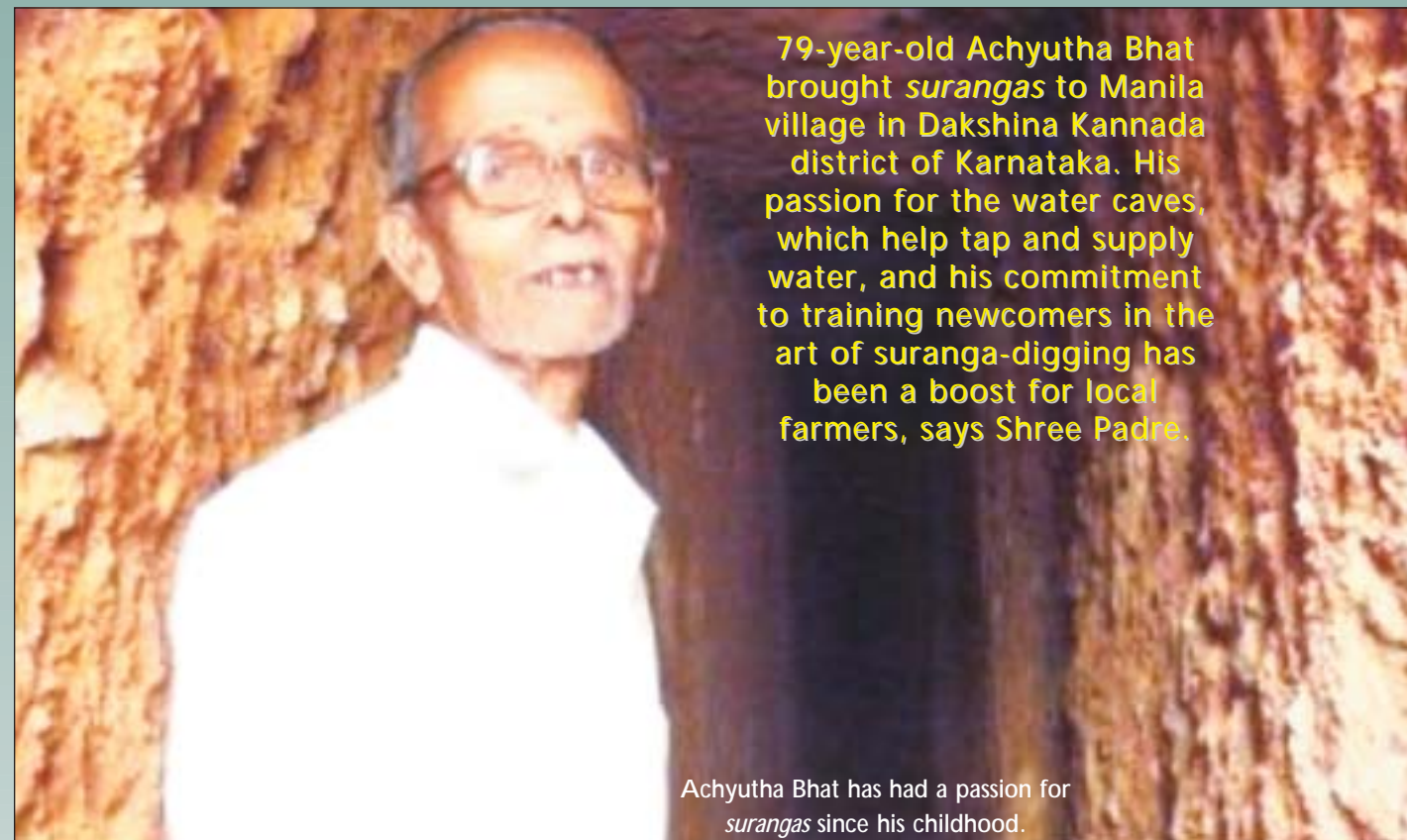
PRAG MAHAL: Located in the city of Bhuj, the splendid palace was built in 1879. Made of Italian marble and sandstone, the palace's most striking feature is its Corinthian pillars and 'jali work' depicting European plants and animals.

CENOTAPH COMPLEX: The complex, located in Bhuj, is made of red bricks. Of all the tombs in the complex, Rao Lakha, built in 1770, is the largest of all and polygonal in shape. Other monuments are the ones of Rao Rayadhan, Rao Desai and Rao Pragmal.

RAANndevious Kutch

With breathtaking vistas, an intriguing history, and rich tradition, colour and enchantment, Kutch's experience remains both remote and strange. Yet, the region remains unsurpassed in terms of beauty and exuberance that no one with a taste for adventure, excitement, and the exotic would like to miss....

A gurukula for SURANGAS



79-year-old Achyutha Bhat brought *surangas* to Manila village in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka. His passion for the water caves, which help tap and supply water, and his commitment to training newcomers in the art of suranga-digging has been a boost for local farmers, says Shree Padre.

Achyutha Bhat has had a passion for *surangas* since his childhood.

Like the *surangas*, the man-made tunnels for water, this 79-year-old Karnataka farmer, who has been attached to the suranga system of harvesting water, for more than 50 years, remains unknown to the world outside. Manimoole Achyutha Bhat, an arecanut farmer, brought an age-old water harvesting system to the village of Manila in Dakshina Kannada district. Thanks to this system, today Bhat and many of his neighbouring farmers have no water shortages.

Bhat's family has nearly 20 *surangas* in their property, 14 of which are still functional. *Surangas* provide water not only for irrigation, but also for drinking and domestic purposes too. What is more, they don't have to spend a single penny on diesel or electricity to draw this water. The water is free flowing — in the sense that they flow owing to gravitational pull.

In the family's 15-acre barren hill slope, nearly five acres of arecanut and coconut gardens owe its existence to the *surangas*. No other water body, like wells, is quite practicable in this part of the state because of the slope and soil

type. "If and when we foresee water scarcity," explains Achyutha's son Govinda Bhat, 51, "We go for one more suranga."

There are about 20 houses in Manimoole, an area in Manila, which have *surangas* that yield a fair amount of water. For most of these, Bhat may have divined water.

As the land is sloping, cultivating it is possible only by levelling plots at different heights. What the Bhat's do is a much planned, decentralised system of irrigation. Before levelling a plot, they dig a suranga, 25 feet above that. Once they strike water, the plot levelling continues. The water, oozing out of the suranga, is then collected in an earthen tank and the irrigation carried out by mist jets. Thus they ensure pumpless irrigation to all the farming plots. Today, they have six water tanks. A few of these tanks are also interconnected.

The Bhat's old house which stood at a lower level was fed by a suranga. After they constructed their present house, the force from the old suranga was not enough to supply water to the house. So they went higher and dug a suran-

ga there. Today, starting from the kitchen, to all the water taps inside and outside the house, this suranga supplies fresh water. "Fortunately, we are blessed with water within 50 kolu (one kolu is equal to 2.5 feet), if we dig a suranga after careful divining," Govinda says proudly. His calculation is simple. "For a 50 kolu suranga, we need Rs. 15,000, as per present wage rate. But once we spend that, there is no worry later with no recurring expenditure. We don't need diesel nor do we have to bear with power cuts."

Bhat was first struck by this water harvesting method in his childhood. It was in a nearby village where he read Sanskrit that Padre first saw a suranga. His father who frequented the Sanskrit school was so impressed by the suranga that he wanted to dig one too. So, when Bhat turned 10, Malayalee moplals from northern Kerala were brought in to dig the first suranga of the village. Observing the processes, the family learnt its intricacies. There was no looking back since.

"If the banks start giving loans for this purpose, there would be more takers. Why can't they finance this traditional, proven sustainable system, than financing bore wells that aren't dependable," Bhat asks.

In most cases, the farmers dig *surangas* in their own land. Yet at times — very rarely — it may go beneath the neighbour's land like a metro train line. At present suranga digging does not need permission from the panchayat or any other governmental body.

Bhat was attracted to *surangas* for many reasons. First, they provide ever flowing water. Second, as the water flows owing to gravity, no other energy or fuel is required. Step by step, he mastered all the departments of suranga digging like water divining, digging at a gradient, carefully extracting the loose soil, sensing danger while digging, changing the direction of the suranga if need be.

According to an estimate, today Manila village has more than 300 *surangas*. The village houses a total of 480 homes. Says Govinda, "At least half of the houses have at least one suranga for their drinking water purpose."

However, says Bhat, "Digging *surangas* is not an easy skill. It needs working hard and common sense."

Interestingly, he doesn't entrust suranga digging to professionals. Almost invariably, he gets it done by regular, ordinary workers by giving them incentives. Thanks to Bhat, at least two dozen farm labourers have learnt the art of digging *surangas*.

Manimoole can be described as a 'gurukula for *surangas*'. "Of course, those who learn the skill from here have been called to dig *surangas* from nearby villages," says Govinda. Added to that, Bhat can now identify potential areas for a suranga.

How does he do that? "Generally, I look out for water indicator trees such as *dhoopada mara* (*Vateria indica*) and *basari mara* (*Ficus virens*) and the like. Even the fast growing *uppalige mara* (*Macranga indica*) is an indicator. Termite hills on a row is another indication," he says.

Starting from the Sixties — since then suranga digging

has substantially increased in Manila — though he hasn't kept count, he has located areas for at least 100 suranga owners. He recalls, "A few out of this, like Aithu Naika, who were planning to sell their property thinking that there was no water, today have water in plenty."

At 79, Bhat is still very active. Laughs Govinda, "He has this habit of entering the suranga after the labourers have left and digging for half an hour himself. His enthusiasm to look for water can't be dampened. Even if we start a new suranga tomorrow, I'm sure he will physically join hands with the workers."

Of late, *surangas* have been on a decline largely owing to the introduction of bore well machines that dig a well a day. The number of skilled workers who can dig *surangas* has also declined. In fact, they get better remuneration working rubber plantations. Besides, there is some risk in suranga digging. Though rare, injury or death during the digging has happened in the past.

But Govinda is optimistic. He doesn't think the skill would die anytime soon. "As long as there are people interested in *surangas*, it won't die. It won't die for want of diggers," he says confidently. Bhat who brought *surangas* to Manila has not only been instrumental in propagating it, but has also kept the tradition alive for decades by training many in the art of the suranga.

(This article was first published in India Together at www.indiatogether.org and is republished here with permission.)



Transporting dug-out soil in a hand pulled trolley. (Pics: Shree Padre)

Madhuri awarded Padma Shri

Bollywood diva Madhuri Dixit was awarded the Padma Shri, the fourth-highest civilian award of India on May 10. She was conferred the award for her contributions to the Indian cinema.

Madhuri came from Florida along with her family to receive the prestigious award from President Pratibha Patil. Manoj Night Shyamalan, Hans Raj Hans, Tom Alter and Baichung Bhutia also received Padma Shri awards. The function was held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Ratan Tata, Lakshmi Mittal, E. Sreedharan, Viswanathan Anand were among the other recipients of the Padma Awards.

Former bureaucrat P.N. Dhar, former Chief Justice of India A.S. Anand and head of the Nobel Prize awardee IPCC Dr. R.K. Pachauri received the coveted Padma Vibhushan award.



I rip off Spielberg: Shyamalan

Manoj Night Shyamalan has been one of the few filmmakers of Indian origin who have made their mark in Hollywood. His work has also been acknowledged by India, which has honoured him with the Padma Shri. "It was great! It made me feel re-connected with my roots. It made me feel India understood the relevance of a journey that was so meaningful to me."

The man behind global hits like 'The Sixth Sense' and 'Signs', however, feels that India is obsessed with his box-office performance. "You can't judge my career by the box-office alone. It feels like everyone is five years behind. When I go to Europe they talk about my (newer films) 'Unbreakable' and 'The Village'," said the filmmaker who was nominated for the Oscars



in 1999. Shyamalan also disagrees with the criticism that he is a 'one pony trick' man as all his movies have a supernatural twist. "I never had an agenda. All my movies are conversations about faith. The supernatural element just happened. I think my life illustrates a shift in culture where I may be American. But at heart I remain very Indian."

When told that 'The Sixth Sense' remains a most ripped-off film, he said: "At the end of the day we're all borrowing from one another. I was ripping off Steven Spielberg anyway. I even told Steven that." When told that some of his films were critical failures,

he said: 'The Sixth Sense' being one of them. Yes, it did get nominated for the Oscars. But if you're talking about Oscars, that's just 500 of my peers. My very next film disproved the myth that you've portrayed about my movies. 'Unbreakable' is actually my most resonant movie. I feel I surpassed my previous film as a movie maker over here, although it was my lowest-grossing movie for a while. That was an irony for me. And time has proven that it was wrongly received. It's my personal favourite."

Talking about his latest film, he lights up. "'The Happening' is definitely my scariest movie. It's probably the most intense experience that I've had so far. The 90 minutes of playing time offer the most incredibly intense experience for the audience." —IANS

'Ghatothkach' fronts elephant campaign

The character of Ghatothkach in the upcoming animation film 'Ghatothkach — Master of Magic' has been adopted as a brand ambassador by People for Ethical Treatment to Animals (PETA) for their "Save The Elephant" campaign.

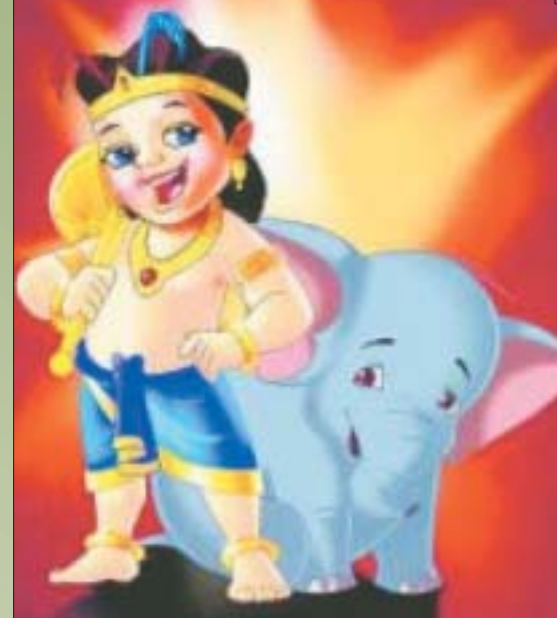
Speaking at the release of the film's music album, PETA campaign manager N.G. Jayasimha said: "Through the film 'Ghatothkach', we want to spread the message that elephants do not belong in zoos or circuses. They have a natural habitat which they must be allowed to live in. We want the people to be 'ele-friends'."

PETA campaign coordinator Sachin Bangera told *Indo-Asian News Service*: "Ghatothkach's best friend is an elephant called Gajju who lives in a free environment. This will definitely make people think about the animal's natural habitat. Besides, a message will also be carried before the film to generate awareness for the animal."

The film is the story of Ghatothkach, the son of Hindu mythological figure Bheema and his wife Hidimba. In the movie, Ghatothkach is shown to have magical powers. The film is an interesting mix of magic, action, romance, comedy and fantasy.

The film, which was premiered at the Cannes Film Festival on May 17, has been directed by Singeetam Srinivasa Rao, who has earlier made internationally acclaimed films like 'Pushpak', 'Appu Raja' and 'Little John'.

"We have hired the best talents from Britain, the United States, Singapore, Canada, the Philippines and India. This will be a landmark film in Indian animation," said the 77-year-old director whose first animation film was 'Son of Alladin'.



'Merchants Of Bollywood' thrill South Africans

The live stage show 'The Merchants of Bollywood', providing entertainment along with an insight into the Mumbai-based film industry, ended the South African leg of its international tour on May 31 with sold-out shows in capital Johannesburg and Durban. The show entertains and educates the

audience about Bollywood's development through the decades, and also subtly gets the spectators to question their own values, stigmas and difficulty with change. The plot revolves around the conflict between Bollywood choreographer Ayesha Merchant and her grandfather Shantilal who considers dance sacred

and refuses to compromise with tradition. Putting all this into a fascinating spectacle through impressive sound, lighting and props, it has something for all ages — from the snatches of classical items that are the root of all Indian dance and music to the modern-day Western styles adopted by Bollywood. —IANS



From Right: Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Amitabh Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan and Jaya Bachchan arrive at the 61st Cannes International Film Festival on May 17 in Cannes.

The Bachchans' world tour begins July 18

The Bachchan family's 'Unforgettable' world tour that will see Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan, his son Abhishek and daughter-in-law Aishwarya Rai Bachchan perform together on stage on hit numbers like *Kajra re*, begins on July 18 in Toronto.

The first leg of the tour will have performances in Trinidad & Tobago, Houston, Atlantic City, New York, Vancouver, London, said a statement by Wizcraft International Entertainment, the company which is putting together the tour. —IANS



Rajasthan Royals win inaugural IPL

Rajasthan Royals are the champions of the inaugural Indian Premier League (IPL). In a tense, last-ball finish they beat Chennai Super Kings by three wickets at the D.Y. Patil Stadium at Nerul in Navi Mumbai on the night of June 1.

The Royals, dubbed as underdogs initially, steadily grew into the best team by the end of the Twenty20 tournament under Shane Warne's leadership. Fittingly, he was at the wicket to calm his team mates' nerves and pull off a game that was tremulously balanced on the knife's edge when Lakshmipathy Balaji bowled the last ball with the scores tied.

Royals needed 18 runs from the last two overs and as luck would have it Balaji was not at his best in the game when he was asked to bowl the last over. He could not steel his nerves while Parthiv Patel behind the stumps was not exactly at his best. A wide resulted in a bye and that nullified a dot ball he bowled.

Winning the toss and electing to field, Royals bowled and fielded superbly to restrict Super Kings to 163 for five and then reached the target, notwithstanding a few anxious moments, to lift the glittering trophy and with it the winners' cheque \$1 million.

After the two tame semi-finals, it was a fitting final,

which could have been scripted differently if Super Kings had spaced their innings a bit better in the last five overs, which only yielded 46 runs even though they had five wickets in hand. Yet, it was a needle contest that could have gone either way.

Once again it was Yusuf Pathan who did the star turn for the Royals. When Super Kings innings was trundling along nicely, The Baroda all-rounder struck three crucial blows with his steady off-spin to put the Chennai lower order batsmen under pressure. Then when his own team's batting seemed to be floundering, he came in to clout 56 runs with four sixes. Shane Watson made a valuable 28 for Royal. In last over Royals were requiring eight runs — was a close affair, but the advantage was always with the batting side and with one ball to go and the scores tied, Sohail Tanvir swung Balaji away for the winning runs.

Pathan walked away with the Man of the Match in final and Watson was adjudged Man of the Series. Sohail Tanvir won the purple cap for his 22 wickets and the orange cap for the highest scorer went to Shaun Marsh of Kings XI Punjab.

ICC president-elect David Morgan and BCCI president Sharad Pawar were among the dignitaries present at the finals.

—IANS

Archery: Indian men bag first World Cup gold

The Indian men's team clinched its first ever gold medal in a Meteksan World Cup archery competition since its inception three years ago when it defeated Malaysia 218 points to 215 in the final of the third edition this year at Antalya in Turkey on May 30.

The second-seeded Indian men's team, comprising Rahul Banerjee, Mangal Singh Champia and Jayanta Talukdar trailed fourth-ranked Malaysia in the first two ends of 12 arrows only to recover in the next two ends of 12 to clinch the issue by a difference of three points.

The Indians have won individual gold medals in World Cup competition but never a team gold. The last time India won a team gold was in the 15th Asian archery championship at Xi'an in China last year where Mangal Singh Champia earned India an Olympic quota place.

At the World stage, the Indian team's best performance was finishing second, behind Korea at the 2005 Madrid World Championship.

In the semifinals, India had got to face a tough challenge from Chinese Taipei with a clash of 218-210. It was not an unusual affair at the grand event as the Indian archers have won four golds previously, though individually.

But the men's team won't be able to represent India in the Beijing Olympic because only two archers have been selected, one point lacking for a country to qualify for the team competition.

Whereas Indian women's team, consisting of Dola Banerjee, L. Bombayla Devi and Reena Kumari will represent India at the Beijing Olympics both in the team and individual events.

—IANS



Golden days of hockey will return soon: Pargat Singh



Olympian Pargat Singh sees a ray of hope in the Indian hockey team's performance in the Azlan Shah Cup held last month and believes the day is not far when the game will get back its memorable days. Singh, who was the manager of the team which emerged runners-up in the tournament at Ipoh, Malaysia, said the players had put in a lot of hard work to beat some of the best teams in world to reach the title-clash.

"Indians might have lost the final to Argentina in Azlan Shah but the team has done exceptionally well to reach there. I could see a big improvement, If India keeps on performing like this, I am sure that we will get back the golden days of hockey in two years' time" Singh said.

The young Indian team scripted an amazing turnaround to win four successive matches after two defeats. "The same team lost to Argentina 1-5 in the league. But in the finals, they took it to the extra time. That itself shows the players are learning from their mistakes," he said.

Kolkata gives Kahn a grand farewell



Around 20,000 fans at Salt Lake Stadium gave Oliver Kahn a standing ovation as the Bayern Munich goalkeeper entered the turf one last time against city giants Mohun Bagan. Kahn was overwhelmed by the atmosphere. "It is a very special moment for me. Thank you for this great night," he said, emotionally wrought, during the break.

Kahn was felicitated by the Indian Football Association (IFA) with a gold-plated ball studded with 8640 diamonds on it. Mohun Bagan club also presented the German with a silver boat, the club's mascot, and a card for life-time membership.

'Shatranj Ke Khiladi' to be screened at Leon Chess tourney

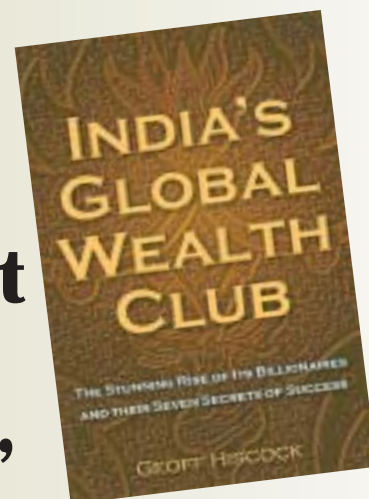
Legendary Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray's 'Shatranj ke Khiladi' is one of the six film to be screened at Leon Chess Tournament in Spain. The film is hailed a masterpiece in Indian cinema and is based on a novel by Munshi Prem Chand. The drama, set in 1856, tells the story of a chess game between two men even as Indians were engaged in a battle against the British Empire. So consumed were they by chess, they noticed little else.

The film featured Sanjeev Kumar, Saeed Jaffrey, Shabana Azmi, Amjad Khan and Richard Attenborough.





'Australia must capitalise on India's growth'



Business is booming in India. And Australia with its expertise must capitalise on it, says a veteran Australian journalist and the author of a book on the subject. Geoff Hiscock has authored *India's Global Wealth Club: The stunning Rise of its Billionaires and the Secrets of Their Success*, published this year by John Wiley & Sons. Hiscock believes the opportunities for Australian companies are immense although its big relationship with India will start only in the next five to ten years. "The Indian supply chain is deficient and requires expertise in the transport and logistics sector. Australian company Linfox has seen the opportunity and entered the market in time, but there is opportunity for many more, for example, in the next five to 10 years India will need 50 million truck drivers, who will need to be trained," Hiscock told *IANs*.

Food processing is another sector where Australian companies with their expertise in food packaging and shipping can find a huge market, he said.

The Tata Group has a sourcing arrangement for its consumer durables business with Australia's Woolworths that operates retail formats as varied as supermarkets, convenience stores, liquor, petrol, general merchandise and consumer electronics among others.

The Indian automotive industry is on the move. Hiscock says: "As Indian companies look for more markets abroad, Australia could be a place for market testing their products for international acceptability. At the same time, Indian companies could be look-

ing at Australian technology in automotive design and components."

In the book, he also profiles the success stories of 100 of India's richest.

"The message across the board is: keep it simple, business doesn't have to be complicated. Give it all your passion, focus, dedication and infuse the same passion in people working for the company. The right timing in business is a big factor and so is some amount of luck," Hiscock said. According to the author, there are seven secrets of India's remarkable resurgence — India's size, science, diaspora, cultural history, English literacy, strategic weight and switch to a globalisation mindset. The book provides rich insights into the intriguing subject of what makes India tick. It is a good reference source for those venturing into this highly lucrative but profoundly complex Indian marketplace.

Hiscock is also the author of the hugely successful books *Asia's Wealth Club* (1997) and *Asia's New Wealth Club* (2000). "As a consequence of rapid growth in the Indian share market in 2007, even though the gloss has been taken off in 2008, IPOs have thrown up at least 10 to 12 new billionaires in the last 6 months," he said.

"Most of the billionaire newcomers are in financial services, property, construction and infrastructure, reflecting the hottest sectors of the Indian economy," he added. He lists 12 new names reshaping the order of India's Global Wealth Club in 2008 — Anand Jain of Jai Corp; Gautam Adani of Adani Enterprises; Rakesh K. Wadhawan of HDIL; Reji Abraham

of Aban Offshore, L. Madhusudhan Rao of Lanco Infratech; Ravi Puravankara of Puravankara Projects; Atul Punj of Punj Lloyd; Nimesh Kampani of JM Financial; Murali K. Divi of Divi's Labs; P.N.C. Menon of Sobha Developers; Rohtas Goel of Omaxe; and Sameer Gehlaut of Indiabulls Financial Services.

Hiscock has just completed his second book focusing on the "most prospective" retail sector in India. To be launched later this year, it explores the changes in the Indian consumer, how younger Indians have more confident and are willing to borrow to finance their consumption.

According to Hiscock, the first big IPO success of 2008 is Future Capital, the consumer finance arm of the Future Group empire created by India's innovative retailer Kishore Biyani. Biyani faces tough competition in the retail sector from Reliance Industries, whose chairman and managing director Mukesh Ambani ranks among India's richest men.

Also in the retail fray are: Sunil Bharti Mittal of Bharti Airtel, who is due to open his first Bharti supermarket soon and Kumar M. Birla of Aditya Birla Group, who is launching his own chain of supermarkets.

Hiscock says: "The things that have driven growth in India include its technology, its expanding share market, its financial reforms, its young population and a relatively benign environment. It is India's century for the taking. The Golden Bird is ready to fly again."

— Neena Bhandari/Sydney



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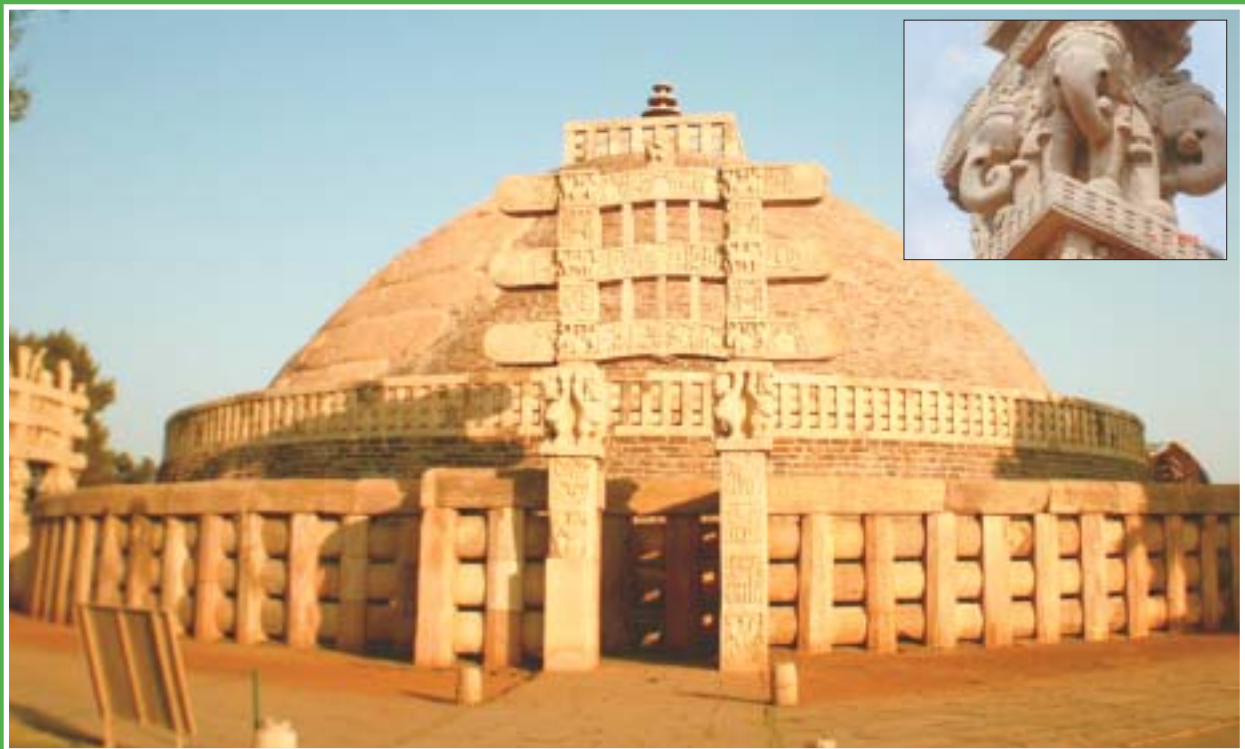


**Ministry of Overseas
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SANCHI: THE LAND OF STUPAS



Sanchi is a small village in Raisen district, located 46 km north east of Bhopal, and 10 km from Besnagar and Vidisha in the central part of the state of Madhya Pradesh. It is home to several Buddhist monuments dating from the 3rd century BC to the 12th century CE.

Sanchi is the site of three Stupas. Stupa No. 1, also called the 'Great Stupa' is one of the most magnificent monuments of its time. Emperor Ashoka probably started its construction in the middle of the 3rd century BC and was later enlarged. It is enclosed by a massive stone railing pierced by four gateways. These gateways have elaborate carvings, depicting the life of the Buddha. Each gateway is made up of two square posts, topped by statues of animals and dwarfs. It consists of a base, bearing a hemispherical dome (*anda*) representing the dome of heaven enclosing the earth. It is surmounted by a square-rail unit (*harmika*) from which rises a mast (*Yasti*). It symbolises the cosmic axis. The mast bears umbrellas (*chatras*) that represent the various heavens (*devaloka*).

Stupa No. 2, with railing decorations, has carvings relating to late Sunga period (1st century BC) while Stupa No. 3, with its single gateway (*torana*) was constructed in late 1st century AD. These stupas attract thousands of visitors every year. Other prominent features of Sanchi include a commemorative pillar erected by Ashoka (265-238 BC). There is also a famous temple Gupta temple built in early 5th century AD and contains some of the best specimens of Indian sculpture.

However, with the decline of Buddhism in India, Sanchi became a forgotten place. In 1881, a British officer, General Taylor, took the initiative to preserve this land. Amateur archaeologists and treasure hunters had by then ravaged the site. Between 1912 and 1919 the structures were restored to their present condition under the supervision of Sir John Marshall, then Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India. Today, around 50 monuments remain on the hill of Sanchi, including three stupas and several temples. The monuments have been listed among the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
www.moia.gov.in, www.overseasindian.in