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Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and U.S. President George W. Bush sharing a joke as they line up for a group photo of the leaders of the G-8 and Outreach Countries at Heiligendamm, Germany, on June 8. (Photo: Press Information Bureau)

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh attends G-8 Summit

■ INS Jal ashwa, a Landing Platform Dock, is commissioned by the Indian Navy at Norfolk, Virginia

■ India hopes to double trade with the U.S. by 2009, says Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath

■ India's financial capital, Mumbai, features among the Top 10 global financial hubs

India hopes to double trade with U.S. by 2009



PHOTO LEFT: Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath, right, addressing a press conference at the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C., on June 28. Also seen is Ambassador Ronen Sen. PHOTO RIGHT: Nath with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

India hopes to double its bilateral trade with the United States by 2009 as it continues to engage its largest trading partner in a bid to remove divergences on issues of trade and commerce.

Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath expressed this hope at a press conference in Washington, D.C., on June 28 after a series of meetings with senior U.S. officials. Nath, who was in the city to attend the U.S.-India Business Council's 32nd anniversary 'Global India Summit', had a brief exchange with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice besides bilateral meetings with Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson Jr., Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns and U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Susan Schwab.

India and the U.S., he said, enjoy healthy relations with a total trade volume of slightly over \$30 billion in the last fiscal. The U.S. currently accounts for 16.8 percent of Indian exports and 6.3 percent of its imports. India now would like to add more content to a larger trade basket.

Nath reiterated India's commitment to take the Doha round of world trade talks forward as New Delhi wants to see a strong multilateral system in place as a powerful instrument of delivering international prosperity.

"We, like the United States, do not want to see the multilateral system fractured by the failure of the Doha talks, and our inability to engage with each other candidly and fruitfully," he said, seeking mutual respect for each other's sensitivities.

Denying that the failure of the Group of Four trade ministers to reach agreement at Potsdam had caused tension between the two, Nath said it was not a question of only India, Brazil or

the European Union agreeing. "You have to take on board a large number of countries."

Discussions would now take place at the ambassadorial level with officials trying to converge on the text, the Minister said, hoping that the momentum will continue.

With no industrial tariffs, India can be flexible, but such flexibilities are contingent upon other things such as Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA), Nath said, seeking effective cuts in trade distortions. Distortions are caused by subsidies, Nath said, offering to take 10 percent more cut than what the developed countries were willing to take.

India, he said, is seeking a more balanced, a more just and a more development-oriented outcome in the WTO; an outcome that does not perpetuate the structural flaws in global trade, but redresses them. The future of international trade lies not in tariff-reduction, but in meaningful reform of the rules, Nath said.

He also addressed the Carnegie Endowment conference on 'The Doha Agenda — Delivering on Development', on June 28.

■ IBEF Publication Released



Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath releasing the IBEF publication 'Going Global: India Inc. in the United States' with USTR Ambassador Susan Schwab and USIBC President Ron Somers.

Union Minister Subodh Kant Sahai visits U.S.



PHOTO LEFT: From left are Raja Rajendran, eminent nuclear physicist at the Fermi Lab; and Ajit Pant of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Midwest. Also seen from the right are Jagdish Rai, Acting Consul General of India in Chicago; Minister of State for Food Processing Subodh Kant Sahai; and prominent Indian American Dr. Virinder Bisla. PHOTO RIGHT: The Minister addressing the gathering. At right is Jagdish Rai.

Minister for Food Processing Industries Subodh Kant Sahai visited the U.S. from June 1 to 11. The Minister met with the U.S. Secretary for Agriculture Mike Johanns at Washington, D.C., and discussed the post-harvest and food processing initiatives in India and the India-U.S. Agricultural Knowledge Initiative (AKI).

The Minister said that although India is the largest producer of milk and the second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables, the food processing industry in the country is at a nascent stage. Perishable food items in India have improper shelf life and poor marketing facilities, Sahai said, adding that the focus needed to be on: reducing post-harvest losses, building a supply chain-cold chain, and developing the processing industry. AKI could play an important role in all these areas, he said.

The Minister spoke of setting up a joint laboratory for SPS standards in India to facilitate trade in agricultural items. He said India would be interested in expanding trade and investment in those areas and would welcome

technology transfer from the U.S. to India in the food processing sector.

He also said his ministry was working to set up a National Institute for Food Processing in India.

He also visited the Chicago Board of Trade and addressed a series of road shows in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles on the opportunities in the food processing industry in India. The road shows were attended by U.S. companies looking to invest in the sector in India. Representatives from companies like Pepsi, Hershey, Cargill, JP Morgan, among others, participated in these meetings. Minister Sahai had one-on-one meetings with potential U.S.

investors seeking opportunities in the food processing sector. Amy's Foods, a San Francisco-based organic and packaged food services company, expressed interest in setting up operations in India.

Mellissa, a Los Angeles-based food retailing and marketing company which is one of the large suppliers of Indian mangoes to the U.S. this year, is keen on entering India both for sourcing its supplies and to set up operations. Dole, another Los Angeles-based world leader in building cold chain and supply chains, indicated its intent to enter India and start operations.

Minister Subodh Kant Sahai also visited the WalMart distribution center at Pottsville, Pennsylvania, Robert Mondavi Winery at Napa Valley, California, the Culinary Institute of America at Helena, California, and Melissa's World Variety Produce's vegetables and fruits cold storage and distribution centre at Vernon, California, and had discussions with the concerned professionals at these organizations on investing in India.

Visit to study urban transportation

Minister for Urban Development S. Jaipal Reddy visited the United States to study urban mass transit transport systems in the country. He had visited Los Angeles and San Francisco to see the working of their urban transport systems and was given an in-depth briefing by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in Washington, D.C., on June 1.

The FTA team, led by Administrator James Simpson, went into the different aspects of the subject, including planning, funding, safety and capacity-building.

A Memorandum of Cooperation in public transportation, science and technology is under consideration between the Ministry of Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Vilasrao Deshmukh woos U.S. investors

Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh touted Maharashtra as India's best foreign investment destination before an audience of some 200 people consisting mainly of prospective American investors at the prestigious Metropolitan Club in Manhattan recently.

Noting that Maharashtra has become India's economic powerhouse due to its competitiveness that surpasses even countries like Russia, Italy and South Africa, Deshmukh told the audience at the 'Maharashtra Investment Forum' that opportunities were waiting for foreign investors to be tapped in the western Indian state.

"The questions for CEOs worldwide today are not whether their companies should go to India, but whether they can afford not to be in India. And they will obviously ask the real question as to where in India they should invest. The answer is obviously Maharashtra," Deshmukh said as he made a pitch for foreign investment for his state.

"Maharashtra has many inherent strengths, including its strategic location, competitive business clusters, a highly skilled and productive workforce and an investor-friendly government," he said.

The Chief Minister said he wants to develop the state as Asia's most competitive manufacturing and service



hub. "In Mumbai, the 'Gateway of India' was built to commemorate the arrival of foreign rulers. Today, that same gateway is our own and we use it to welcome you, foreign investors," Deshmukh said.

"With Mumbai ranking among the world's top 10 financial centers, Maharashtra should be your investment destination," Deshmukh told the audience. The plan, he said, is to make Mumbai one of the Top 5 financial hubs in the world.

"Out inherent strengths are our excellent infrastructure, academic institutions, highly skilled and produc-

tive workforce, as well as choice of multiple locations (for foreign investors) and a proactive government," Deshmukh said.

Others who addressed the conference included Maharashtra Minister for Industries Ashok Chavan, Maharashtra Chief Secretary Johnny Joseph, and Principal Secretary for Industries V.K. Jairath.

The industrialists who addressed the forum included Vice Chairman of Bajaj Auto Madhur Bajaj; Senior Vice-President of Boeing Commercial Airplanes Dinesh Keskar; Chairman of Kalyani Group of Industries Baba Kalyani; Mahindra and Mahindra's Arun Nanda; CEO and Founder of New Vernon Capital Arshad Zakaria; Founder and Chairman of The Chatterjee Group Purnendu Chatterjee; CEO of DaimlerChrysler India Wilfred Aulbur; and Managing Director of Siemens India Limited Juergen Schubert.

The one day-investment forum was organized by Institutional Investors.

"The jewel in the crown in India's economic success story is the state of Maharashtra. The state has become synonymous with IT around the world, but that is only the part of the story. A great deal is going on in that part of the country, providing investment opportunities for foreign and domestic investors," Deshmukh noted.

India, U.S. to establish Aviation Cooperation Program

Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel, Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters and Acting Director of the U.S. Trade Development Agency (USTDA) Leocadia I. Zak, on June 22 signed an MoU to establish the India-U.S. Aviation Cooperation Program (ACP).

The ACP is a public-private partnership between the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the USTDA, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and U.S. aviation companies to strengthen bilateral cooperation for developing and modernizing India's civil aviation infrastructure in the managerial, operational and technical areas.

Through the ACP, the partners would work

together to promote enhanced safety, technical efficiency and system capacity and to facilitate and coordinate training and technical ties.

Patel and Peters also discussed issues of common interest, which would enable the two countries to take their collaboration in the area of civil aviation to new heights.



Peters underlined that cooperation in this sector between the two democracies would enhance freedom of people to travel between the two countries.

Patel noted that U.S. is the only country with which India has signed an "Open Skies Agreement", indicative of the special and strategic partnership.

He welcomed U.S. cooperation to make air travel in India safer, more efficient and better connected and said that this would help India build a world-class aviation system.

He thanked the Government of US for its "partnership on the historic journey to the skies". He invited Secretary Peters to visit India.

India becomes a member of Washington Accord

The National Board of Accreditation (NBA) of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) became a member of the prestigious Washington Accord on June 21.

Prof. Damodar Acharya, chairman, AICTE, and Ravi Mathur, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, called on India's Ambassador to the U.S.

Ronen Sen to brief him about India's membership of Washington Accord.

The proposal for India's membership was placed by the Indian delegation comprising Prof. Acharya, Mathur and Prof. Prasad Krishna, Member Secretary, National Board



Ambassador Sen, second from left, with the members of the delegation.

of Accreditation (NBA), in the 8th biennial meeting of the International Engineering Meetings 2007 at Washington, D.C. With this membership, NBA's accreditation system gets an international recognition.

The Washington Accord is an international agreement between registering bodies of member countries accrediting academic engineering programs at university level, leading to the practice of engineering at the full professional level. According to this agreement, each registering body accepts the accrediting processes of the others.

India has been elected as a provisional member along with Russia and Sri Lanka.

CII chief seeks 'inclusive' investments in India

The new Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) president, Sunil Bharti Mittal, wants U.S. companies to make long-term and "inclusive" investments in India as the country today offers "the perfect combination" for partnership.

"Thanks to economic reforms, India is growing at a fast pace; understanding of U.S. industry is increasing in India and irritation levels are going down in America," he said at a luncheon hosted in Washington, D.C., by the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) for a visiting CII delegation.

"This offers the perfect combination for growth of Indo-U.S. economic

relations," he said, adding, "A new, young, confident India awaits all of you." Asking Indian and American businessmen "to build on India's 16 years of economic reforms — ensuring that growth is sustainable, reaching all segments of society", Mittal said the world's two largest democracies were natural allies.

India offered a big continent of consumers for U.S. goods, he said, encouraging American companies to engage with India deeply as only a few nodes were left not open to foreign investment, he said.

CII chief mentor Tarun Das said defense cooperation between the two

countries was showing good progress with some major business coming the way of U.S. companies, thanks to a new level of confidence in U.S. supplies. Besides Mittal, the executive delegation of the CII included Hari S. Bhartia of Jubilant Organosys Ltd., C.K. Birla of Hindustan Motors Ltd., Atul Punj of Punj Lloyd Ltd., and Analjit Singh of Max India Ltd.

Ron Somers, president of USIBC, comprising 250 of the largest U.S. companies investing in India and two dozen global Indian companies, thanked CII for its partnership in moving Indo-U.S. commercial relations forward.

India, U.S. to cooperate in non-proliferation

India and the U.S. on June 14 concluded two-day talks on strengthening regional and global efforts to prevent proliferation and combating the emerging threat of nuclear terrorism.

The Indian team, headed by K.C. Singh, Additional Secretary (International Organizations) in the Ministry of External Affairs, and the U.S. team, led by Acting Under Secretary of State for International Security and Non-Proliferation John

C. Rood, discussed an array of issues relating to multilateral initiatives and strategic trade controls and regional security matters.

"Discussions covered a wide range of issues, including global nuclear non-proliferation challenges, export controls and regional and global efforts to prevent proliferation," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.

Under Secretary Rood also called on Foreign Secretary Shivshankar

Menon and Shyam Saran, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for negotiations relating to the Indo-U.S. nuclear agreement, and discussed ways to enhance cooperation in non-proliferation.

The annual dialogue was held at a time when New Delhi and Washington are finalizing a bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreement that will lead to the resumption of nuclear commerce between the two countries.

Four Indian majors in global 'IT 100'

Indian majors like Bharti Airtel, TCS, Infosys and Satyam Technologies have found place in the 'Information Technology 100', *BusinessWeek's* ranking of the top tech performers in the world.

Amazon.Com has vaulted from No. 23 in 2006 to the No. 1 spot this year. The report appears in *BusinessWeek's* July 2 issue.

Bharti Airtel has been ranked 14, ahead of the likes of Nokia, Google, IBM and Oracle.

TCS is placed at number 23, Infosys at 30 while Satyam Computers is 73rd in the ranking.

Top Four	
	Rank
Bharti Airtel	14
TCS	23
Infosys	30
Satyam Computers	73

BusinessWeek prepared the top 100 list with financial data from Standard & Poor's Compustat, that has information on over 28,000 publicly traded companies. The magazine then trimmed this universe to information-technology companies. To qualify,

companies had to have revenues of at least \$300 million.

Companies whose stock price has dropped more than 75 percent, whose sales shrank, or where other developments raised questions about future performance, were eliminated from contention. Some phone companies whose monopoly power in their countries gave them an unfair advantage over competitors were also dropped. The remaining companies were ranked on four criteria: Return on equity, revenue growth and shareholder return and total revenues, the magazine said.

Ranbaxy launches Pravastatin tablets in U.S.

Pharmaceutical major Ranbaxy Laboratories has said its U.S.-based subsidiary has launched Pravastatin Sodium tablets in 80mg strength in the U.S. markets. Being the first-to-file, the company would enjoy a 180-day exclusivity for Pravastatin, which is indicated in the treatment of primary prevention of coronary events without clinically evident heart disease.



"We will make Pravastatin Sodium 80mg tablets available to all classes of trade immediately," Ranbaxy Pharmaceuticals Inc. (RPI) Vice President of Sales and Marketing Jim Meehan said in a communique to the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE).

According to IMS MAT data for December 2006, the annual sales for Pravastatin 80mg were at \$209 million. The drug is also useful in reducing risks of myocardial infarction, undergoing myocardial revascularization procedures and cardiovascular mortality.

"We are delighted to have this product formulation as an addition to our ever-expanding product portfolio of affordable generic alternatives," Meehan added.

Florida-based RPI is a wholly-owned subsidiary of India's largest pharmaceutical company. RPI is engaged in sale and distribution of generic and branded prescription products in the U.S. healthcare system.

The shares of the domestic pharma major were last trading 0.86 percent up at Rs. 358.45 on the BSE.

Mumbai among world's top financial hubs

Driven by high trading volumes for equities and good presence of global banking and financial services firms, Mumbai has won a place in the world's Top 10 financial flow hubs list, beating Hong Kong and Beijing.

The city has been ranked 10th among the world's biggest centers of commerce in terms of the financial flow volumes by a survey compiled by Mastercard Worldwide, which takes into consideration size of financial



services network besides equity, bond, derivatives and commodity contract transactions.

The list, led by London and New York, include two other Asian cities: Tokyo at fifth and Seoul at sixth positions.

Tata Tea makes \$523 mn profit in Coke deal

India's Tata Tea is set to make a profit of \$523 million with the Coca-Cola company buying its 30 percent stake in Vitamin water maker Glaceau for \$1.2 billion.

As part of the \$4.2 billion deal with the world's largest beverage maker for acquiring 100 percent of the capital of U.S.-based Glaceau, also known as Energy Brands Inc., Tata Ltd. (U.K.) has agreed to sell its shares.

Tata Tea and Tata Sons had through their British subsidiaries acquired 30 percent holding in Glaceau for \$677 million in August 2006 when the company was valued at \$2.2 billion. Tatas thus stand to make a profit of \$523 million. Announcing the completion of the deal in Atlanta last week, Coca-Cola said Glacéau will now operate as a separate business unit of Coca-Cola North America, giving it a strong platform from which to accelerate its growth in active lifestyle beverages.



India fastest-growing entertainment hub



India has emerged as the fastest-growing market in the world for spends in entertainment and media (E&M) and a key driver to push the global entertainment and media industry to \$2 trillion by 2011, finds a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

Led by India, E&M spending in Brazil, Russia, India and China (the BRIC nations), will continue to grow at double-digit annual rates during the next five years and will account for 24 percent of global E&M growth during that period.

Economic expansion and a surging E&M sector are driving significant growth in BRIC, finds PwC's '8th Annual Global Media and Entertainment Outlook and Forecast' released in New York recently. Spending in the BRIC countries will increase by a 14.7 percent, expanding from \$127 billion in 2006 to \$251.5 billion in 2011. That gain will be nearly three times the projected 5.5 percent compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) for the rest of the world. Though the U.S. still remains the largest market, it's also one of the slowest-growing.

Worldwide, the industry is growing at an average rate of 6.4 percent, and is expected to touch \$2 trillion in 2011. India's CAGR of 18.5 percent is the highest estimated in the fastest-growing Asia-Pacific segment. In Asia-Pacific, spending on internet, TV distribution, casino and other regulated gaming averages 9.6 percent annual growth, and is poised to jump from the current levels of \$297 billion in 2006 to \$470 billion in 2011.

Before someone launches yet another TV channel or Bollywood company, and for those who still think the Internet revolution is safely in some distant future, PwC's report finds that over the next five years, nearly half of the total industry growth is expected to be generated through online and wireless technologies, even in India and Asia-Pacific.

Study says India will be among top IT services markets

India and China will be the fastest-growing IT services markets this year, with spending of small and medium-sized businesses in both countries rising by 15 percent over 2006, a study has said.

Small- and medium-sized businesses in the Asia-Pacific region were expected to invest at least \$18 billion this year in IT-related services, up 11 percent from last year, said the report by the U.S.-based Access Markets International.

There are nearly 20 million such businesses across 13 key markets in the region, excluding Japan, said the report.

The research and consulting firm, which specializes in small- and medium-sized businesses, defines them as commercial entities with up to 999 employees.

Mature markets, such as Australia and South Korea, would continue to drive nearly a third of the total IT services spending among such businesses in the region this year, it added. Businesses in Singapore were forecast to invest more than \$507 million, up 8 percent from 2006, while those in Malaysia were likely to spend more than \$600 million, up 12 percent from 2006.

Telecom to ring in \$25 billion in investments in five years

Notwithstanding high-bid multiples for telecom assets in India, Ernst & Young's latest report on the rise of telecom in Asia says high valuations will not deter investments in the sector. The country's telecom sector will see investments up to \$25 billion over the next five years, projects Ernst & Young.

"Confidence levels in South Asian markets are phenomenal, especially in India — almost an arrogance," the report quotes a leading telecom operator as saying. Besides, financial investors share the view that deals in "India (are) more transparent", the report says.

While most mergers and acquisitions are expansionist, India is amongst the few markets that offers scope for in-market consolidations, it adds, saying India's attractiveness stems from the fact that many other Asian markets do not generate scale to justify large investments.

Also, smaller emerging markets are still inherently more difficult to operate based on factors such as ease of doing business, regulatory and political risks, whereas transitional markets such as Malaysia and Philippines are witnessing slower subscriber growth, the report adds. Another possible factor is that governments in other Asian countries which offer exciting opportunities have been slow to liberalize or offer controlling stakes.



Georgia Tech to set up campus in Andhra Pradesh

The Atlanta-based Georgia Institute of Technology has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Andhra Pradesh government for setting up its international campus near Hyderabad.

Focusing on systems engineering and research, Georgia Tech aims to help in meeting the requirements of global corporations having large operations in the country — such as IBM — through its Indian campus, according to Gary Schuster, provost.

The university, which was scouting for a suitable location for setting up a campus in India since 2004, finally zeroed in on Andhra after visiting eight cities across the country. It will



first set up its facility near Hyderabad on over 20 acres of land and later expand its academic and research facilities to a much bigger campus that would come up on 70 acres in Visakhapatnam. The land is being given by the state government.

The first academic courses at its Hyderabad campus are expected to commence in 2009.

Schuster said that, apart from

offering foreign degrees, the university would look at developing customized courses to suit Indian requirements in partnership with local universities. It also aims to churn-out up to 20 percent of the total Ph.Ds coming from Indian institutes in technology fields.

With regard to the faculty requirement at its proposed campuses in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam, Schuster said the faculty from Georgia Tech would take care of the teaching requirements for the initial years. "In the long-term, we aim to hire 80 percent of the faculty from India while the Georgia Tech faculty will spend 20 percent of its time here," Schuster said.

India to get its first Apple Store



Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Retail is actively negotiating with the \$19.3-billion Apple Inc. of the U.S. to bring its high-end Apple Store to India. If the deal falls into place,

India will be only the second Asian country after Japan and the sixth country outside the U.S. to have an Apple retail outlet. Given that an Apple Store is a single-brand retail outlet, Apple Inc. can hold up to 51 percent equity in the venture.

Apple Inc., which started its flagship outlet in California in 2001, has over 160 stores in the U.S. It also has Apple Stores in Britain, Canada, Italy and Japan. The stores carry Apple computers, software, iPod music players, third-party accessories, and other consumer electronics such as the Apple TV and the eagerly awaited iPhone.

Yash Raj Films-Disney alliance

Film-maker Yash Chopra's Yash Raj Films is tying up with media and entertainment major The Walt Disney Company. The Indian production house together with Walt Disney will make animation movies for the domestic audience. Chopra would use his clout to rope in Bollywood stars to lend their voices for animated characters, reports said. Both the companies plan to release at least one movie a year.

The joint initiative will further strengthen Walt Disney's presence in the Indian media space. It already holds 14.9 percent stake in the Ronnie Screwvala-promoted UTV Software Communications and had also bought UTV's Hindi kids channel, Hungama, last year.



Emerging markets to boost computer usage

Emerging markets like Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) will boost the usage of personal computers (PCs) by over two billion by 2012, says a study.

With more and more hi-tech programs being utilized by these previously untapped markets, the BRIC region alone uses more than 775 million new PCs, said a study called 'Worldwide PC Adoption Forecast, 2007 To 2015', carried out by global technology research company Forrester Research Inc.

"There is nothing more important to the long-term health of the technology industry — and personal technology in particular — than the ability to deliver relevant, accessible and affordable technology to the billions



of people worldwide who have not been exposed to it," Simon Yates, vice president and research director, Forrester Research, said in a statement.

However, there is a great deal of volatility in this, according to Forrester, as vendors are less aware about the emerging new markets and the behavioral pattern of buyers there. Moreover, it would not be possible for vendors to introduce products on a small scale as compared to the bigger matured markets, and this will force suppliers to focus on bringing volume to market more quickly at much greater risk, the report said.

"There are risks. It is safe to assume that life cycles will be longer in emerging markets," Yates said.

Stanford Conference on Indian Economic Policy Reform

Stanford Centre for International Development (SCID) held its 8th annual conference on Indian Economic Policy Reform on June 7 and 8 at the Stanford University campus, Palo Alto, California. This is an annual event at Stanford where leading Indian economic policymakers and experts are invited to interact with India-focused development economists and experts in the U.S.

Prominent participants this year were Members of Parliament Yashwant Sinha, Abhishek Singhvi and Jay Panda; Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor Shyamala Gopinath; Member, National Competitiveness Council, Isher Ahluwalia; and Director, ICRIER, Rajiv Kumar.

Papers were presented and sessions held on subjects such as globalization and its impact on labor markets and



Former Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha, second from left, and Member of Parliament Abhishek Singhvi, second from right, at the Stanford conference.

inequality, infrastructure, power sector reform, trade policy, welfare reform and education reform. Particularly interesting was the session on the political economy of reform in India.

U.S. venture fund invests \$5 mn in Indian travel firm

NEA-IndoUS Ventures, a venture capital fund co-founded by tech evangelist Vinod K. Dham and seasoned Silicon Valley entrepreneur Vani Kola, has invested \$5 million in Via, one of India's leading travel services firms. The first round of funding in Via, launched as FlightRaja last year, will be invested in



expanding its products and service offerings, besides its presence through a network of agents, kiosks and franchises across the country.

"This is the first time an integrated travel services firm is getting VC (venture capital) funding, that too from a U.S. venture firm, which has been investing in technology start-ups and enterprises all along. As we brace to offer travel services spanning air, train and road networks and create an ecosystem for providing end-to-end solutions, the VC funding will give us a leadership position in the travel industry," Via Chairperson Ashwini Kakkar said.

Booking about 5,000 domestic air tickets per day through a network spread across 290 cities in the subcontinent, Via has achieved a Rs. 20 million (\$493,000) turnover per day.

India among 'most challenging' destinations for expats: Survey

With a booming global economy driving overseas postings to a record level, India has emerged as one of the "most challenging" locations to work for expatriates, a new study shows. Over two-third of the multinational companies (MNCs) reported an increase in the number of international assignments in 2006, while as much as 65 percent plan to ramp up their overseas postings this year, according to an annual Global Relocation Trends Survey.

The reported increase for 2006 is a record high level in the 12-year history of the survey, published by GMAC Global Relocation Services. A booming global economy is driving a sharp surge in the number of overseas postings, it said.

Among other findings, the survey revealed that "China, India and Russia were the primary emerging destinations". Human resources professionals believe that overseas assignments have a positive effect on employees' careers as 31 percent of those surveyed said an international assignment leads to faster promotion.

India makes it to global Top 10 among country brands

Leading global brand consultant FutureBrands' Country Brand Index 2006 has ranked India among the top 10 country brands in the world. The country figured seven times across 20 parameters among the 45 countries considered in the index.

India is ranked first in terms of "authenticity", and has improved its position six ranks over the previous year where "history" is concerned. The country's ranking has also improved nine notches insofar as "art and culture" goes.

The index also suggests how Brand India reflects business opportunity as well as value shopping. Overall, India Brand comes in at No. 10 in the index, which is topped by Australia.

The country brand index draws on global quantitative surveys, expert opinions and external statistics.

This is the first time India has figured in the Top 10 of the index.

Immigrants fuel U.S. technology start-ups

A majority of immigrants from India and five other nations who started one fourth of the technology and engineering companies in the United States in the last 10 years were not educated in elite institutions, says a study.

The findings were part of a new study conducted by researchers at Duke University and the University of California, at Berkeley, as a follow-up to a report released in January which showed that in 25.3 percent of the companies started between 1995-

Highlights:

- More than half of the foreign-born founders of U.S. technology and engineering businesses initially came to study.
- Almost 40 percent came because of a job opportunity. They typically founded companies after working and residing in the United States for an average of 13 years.
- Places with a greater concentration of immigrant entrepreneurs than their state averages: Silicon Valley (52.4%), New York City (43.8%), and Chicago (35.8 %).

2005, at least one key founder was foreign-born.

Nationwide, these immigrant-founded companies produced \$52 billion in sales and employed 450,000 workers in 2005. The majority of these immigrant entrepreneurs came from India, Britain, China, Taiwan, Japan and Germany.

Those who received their undergraduate degrees in India graduated from a diverse assortment of institutions. Even the famed Indian Institutes of Technology educated only 15 percent of Indian technology and engineering company founders.

Indian real estate to get \$6 billion in FDI

Realty equity deals worth \$30 billion are in the pipeline for the current year across all Asian markets. One-fifth of these investments (\$6 billion) will find their way into the Indian real estate market alone.



According to a report by property consultants Jones Lang LaSalle on rising FDI in real estate, an estimated \$10 billion foreign investment is expected to enter the Indian real estate sector in the next 12-18 months.

For the most part of the 1990s, FDI inflow into the Indian real estate sector was at \$2-3 billion a year. In 2004-2005, it was recorded at \$5.6 billion, and reached its peak in 2005-2006 at \$7.2 billion.

More than a dozen overseas private equity firms such as Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, JP Morgan and Blackstone Group are looking at investment opportunities in the Indian real estate market.

Morgan Stanley recently closed a deal worth about \$150 million with Oberoi Constructions in Mumbai.

IBM starts operations in Lucknow



Global IT major IBM has announced the commencement of its operations in Lucknow, adding that it would expand its business across Uttar Pradesh over the coming months.

"With Lucknow becoming IBM's first destination in Uttar Pradesh, we would soon be spreading out in the state. In the next phases, we will probably go to Agra, Varanasi, Allahabad, Kanpur and other important cities," said Vivek Malhotra, IBM territory executive, global small and medium business (north and east).

IBM also proposes to spread its wings in 13 cities across India, including, Bhopal, Nasik, Nagpur, Bhubaneswar, Jaipur, Ludhiana and Madurai.

"IBM's operations in Lucknow will target various clients in the government, hospital management, banking, cooperatives and research institutes," Malhotra said. "We have entered into an agreement with agencies like the departments of revenue, irrigation and Uttar Pradesh Electronics Corporation Ltd, for providing IT solutions," he said.

Drug firm Aptuit set to invest \$100 million in India

Global contract drug development firm Aptuit Inc. and



Hyderabad-based Laurus Labs Ltd. have announced the formation of a contract drug development company, Aptuit Laurus.

"The company will combine Aptuit's global offerings in drug development with Laurus' R&D and manufacturing expertise and newly built state-of-the-art facilities to provide

established and emerging pharmaceutical companies with integrated services, technologies and manufacturing capabilities that span the entire drug development lifecycle," an Aptuit statement said.

Aptuit plans to invest over \$100 million over the next four years to build upon Aptuit Laurus' development, manufacturing and informatics capabilities, it said.

The new entity will use the trade name Aptuit Laurus and will be based in

Hyderabad, with additional facilities in Visakhapatnam and Bangalore.

The company will initially provide services to clients in early-stage drug discovery, medicinal chemistry, lead optimization, process development, scale-up, safety and hazard assessment, formulation development and analytical chemistry.

Aptuit Laurus will comprise Laurus' newly-established 160,000 square foot research and development facility in Hyderabad.

Free Software's Moglen on visit to India

Eben Moglen, an architect of the GNU General Public License and one of the greatest legal minds in the world of free software, was recently touring India on a mission to promote his message: "Anything that is worth copying is worth sharing."



Hacker-turned-law-professor Moglen has argued that free software

is a fundamental requirement for a free society over-dependent on technical devices.

Moglen, professor of law and legal history at Columbia University, served pro bono as general counsel for the Free Software Foundation. He is also the chairman of Software Freedom Law Center.

New Delhi-based lawyer Mishi Choudhary has been working to build an India branch of the Software Freedom Law Center.

In India, Moglen spent two weeks meeting policymakers, lawyers and software professionals. India is itself seen as a fast-rising battleground, where the growing army of software programmers will crucially help decide the software future of the planet, whether it turns proprietorial or "free".

Others like free software movement founder Stallman and Microsoft founder Bill Gates have also been making repeated trips to India in recent years.

13

Indian companies hiring Americans

Indian companies, which are becoming major players in the International arena, are hiring aggressively in the United States, reversing the earlier trend when they always transferred Indians to work in America on temporary visas.

Terming it as "reverse offshoring", a new report names India's largest offshoring firm Tata Consultancy Service Ltd (TCS) as well as software giants such as Infosys and Wipro among them, and says some American workers laid off are now being re-employed in Indian companies after training in India.

Wipro, for instance, is scouting U.S.



locations for two big software writing centers that eventually could employ hundreds of programmers each. Cities on its shortlist include Austin and Atlanta, because of their

deep tech-talent pools and reasonable salary costs, *BusinessWeek* magazine says.

"The work we're doing requires more and more knowledge of the customers' businesses, and you want local people to do that," Wipro Chairman Azim Premji is quoted as saying.

Today only 2.5 per cent of Wipro's global workforce is non-Indian, but the company wants to boost that to more than 10 per cent in a few years.

GE to join hands with railways



General Electric wants to build a plant in India in association with the railways to make heavy-haul diesel locomotives.

The joint venture is proposed to be majority-owned by GE, while the railways will take a minority stake.

"We are keen to bring our technology to India," Pratyush Kumar, president and CEO, GE Infrastructure, India, said.

The plant would be capable of rolling out 100-120 locomotives a year, Kumar said, adding that the investment could range between \$100 million and \$200 million.

With the economy growing at a fast clip, the railways have drawn up ambitious plans to upgrade its freight haulage capabilities. In 2005, the railway ministry had mooted a dedicated rail freight corridor to decongest the network at a cost of Rs. 600 billion.

This is expected to result in huge orders for locomotives. "The plant will supply not just to the freight corridor but to the entire railway network," Kumar added. At a later stage, the plant could cater to some overseas markets as well.

Currently, the railways make all their rolling stock (locomotives, wagons and coaches) in-house. However, the technologies used in the existing facilities are dated. "The railways want to use the current opportunity to build factories with world-class technology," an official said.

Caritor completes \$854 mn acquisition of Keane

Caritor Inc., a global IT services provider, has announced the completion of its acquisition of Keane Inc. for an all-cash purchase price of \$854 million.



Under the terms of the merger agreement, holders of the Boston-based Keane's common stock will receive \$14.3 per share in cash, said a company statement.

As a result of this transaction, Keane common stock is no longer traded on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). The resulting private company now operates globally under the Keane name and is based in San Ramon, California, with U.S. client management located in Boston.

Keane now has over \$1 billion in annual revenue and employs more than 14,000 professionals in 10 countries — Australia, Canada, France, India, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, UAE, U.K. and the U.S.

Keane is investing in the development and delivery of customized vertical market solutions that enable clients to transform their business and IT functions and dramatically improve business performance. These solutions comprise consulting, technology, and outsourcing services.

"The Caritor acquisition of Keane is a transformational event for the IT services industry," said Mani Subramanian, chairman and CEO of the new Keane.



INFRASTRUCTURE:

Investing in nation's future

For India's growth story to continue unfolding over the next few years, one of the crucial sectors is infrastructure. The Government of India has estimated that at least \$350 billion is needed by the infrastructure sector — including power, surface transport, aviation and ports — over the next five years.

When huge sums are invested in these core sectors, there will be a spillover effect, benefitting the entire economy. Economic growth will be catapulted to the 10 percent-plus category — from the current 8 to 9 percent levels — once the investments begin.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh recently emphasized the importance of investing in the infrastructure sector. “The institutional architecture for sustaining high levels of investment in infrastructure has been indeed put in place — public-private partnerships

(PPP), systematic bidding systems, viability gap funding and other financing mechanisms and standardized approval procedures. These are already fetching results and to some extent, the increased investment in infrastructure has been a driver of growth as well as demand.”

The growth of infrastructure, among others, would involve a large inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI), added the Prime Minister. For a country that achieved 8 percent-plus gross domestic product (GDP) growth consecutively for the last three years, inadequate infrastructure is a blemish. After many years of decelerated growth in various segments of infrastructure, there is now a widespread consensus that efficient and effective infrastructure services is essential to realize the full potential of the growth impulses of the economy.

While stepping up public investment, India is actively scouting for private

sector participation in infrastructure to provide the adequate scale of investment, technical efficiency, proper enforcement of user charges, and competitive market structure.

“The \$350 billion investment during the 11th Five-Year Plan, beginning 2007, is a Herculean task,” notes a Mumbai-based analyst with Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS). “These investments are expected to be achieved through a combination of public investment, PPPs and exclusive private investments, wherever it's feasible. Investment requirements by 2012 estimated by the Committee on Infrastructure... include \$50 billion for modernization and upgradation of highways, an equal amount for power sector, \$9 billion for civil aviation, \$11.4 billion for ports, and \$68 billion for the railways.”

While funding long-gestation infra-



structure projects remains a major concern, efforts are currently on to build an investor-friendly atmosphere in the country. The government has recently established an infrastructure fund by a special purpose vehicle (SPV), India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd. (IIFCL), in a consortium with Citigroup, IDFC and Blackstone. IIFCL recently sought the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) approval to enhance its limit for raising overseas funds by \$1 billion.

The plan is to launch a \$5-billion fund soon for financing infrastructure projects in the country. Of this, \$2 billion will be deployed as equity capital while the remaining will be raised through long-term debt with maturities exceeding 10 years

Opportunities will be explored domestically apart from tapping the overseas market for raising long-term debt. Another source of funds, according to many, is the burgeoning foreign exchange reserves, now topping the \$200-billion mark.

"The idea that has been germinating for the last two years is that foreign exchange reserves must be put into use in order to promote investments, especially in infrastructure," says Finance Minister P Chidambaram. According to the Economic Survey, there were 837 projects at the end of June 2006 (each costing \$4.65 million and above) with an estimated investment of about \$84 billion spread over 16 sectors, including atomic energy, civil aviation,

Infrastructure development has become the buzzword in India, as the government realises the importance of this sector. Pouring money into infrastructure boosts employment, transforms the economy, and generates millions of dollars in tax revenue, needed for the social sector.

power, railways, road transport and highways, shipping and ports, urban development and water resources.

With an acute electricity shortage staring India in its face, the power sector figures on top of the priority list. According to R.V. Shahi, former secretary, Ministry of Power, the sector is likely to receive investments of over \$56 billion during the 11th Plan, for a capacity addition of 62,000 MW.

"The National Electricity Policy of 2005 is emphatic on fully exploiting non-conventional energy sources, mainly small hydro, wind and biomass," says Shahi.

Coal has continued to remain the mainstay of the power sector, with 54.2 percent of total installed power

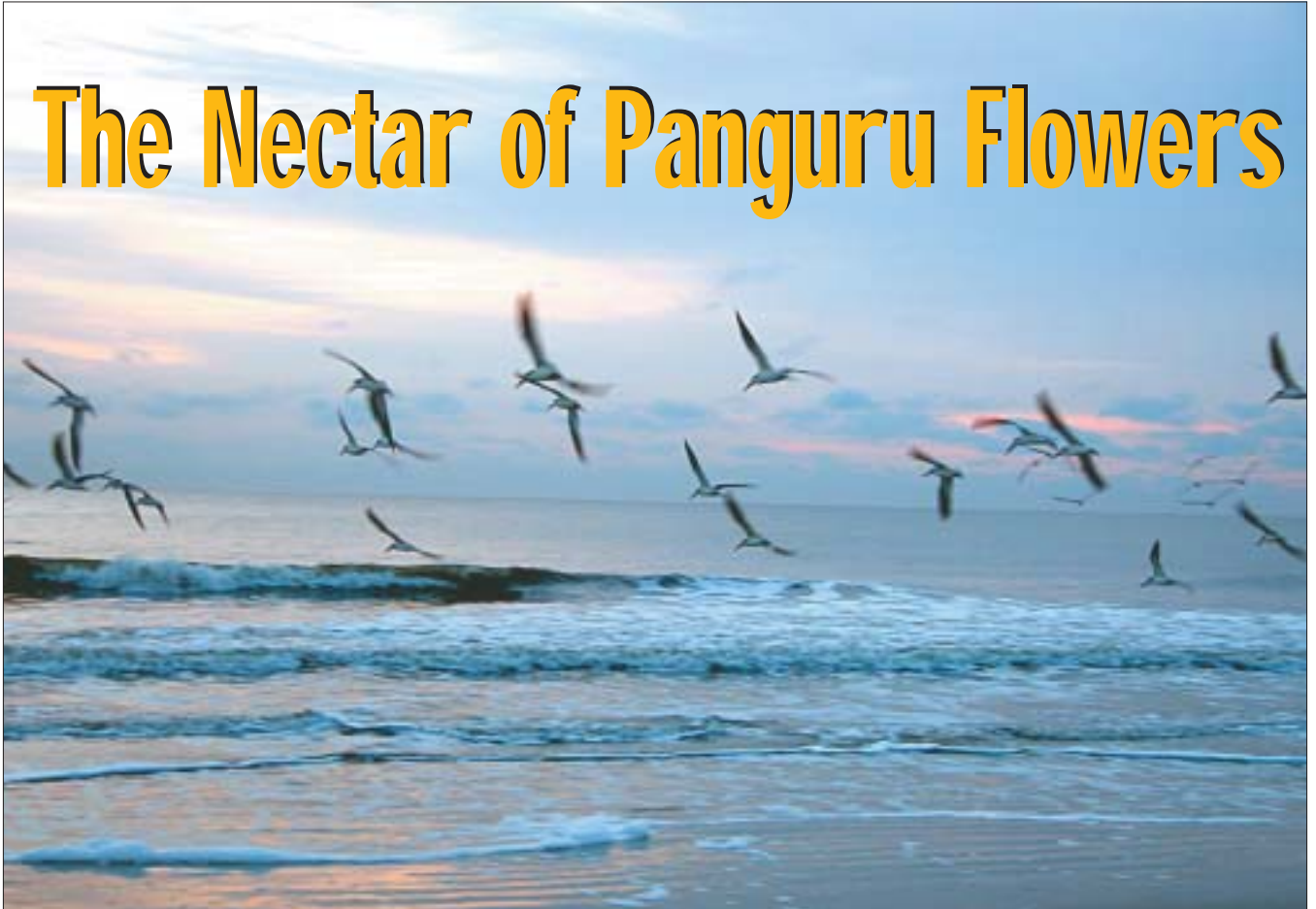
generation capacity in the country being coal-fired thermal units. All the ministry-proposed Ultra Mega Power Projects (UMPPs) of 4,000 MW would be fired by coal. The Ministry has also issued the approach and guidelines to develop Merchant Power Plants (MPPs). Unlike traditional utilities, MPPs compete for customers and absorb the full market risk. There is no guarantee regarding minimum off-take of their output.

MPPs can provide the additional generating reserves that India needs now and will need in the future. MPPs up to a capacity of 1,000 MW would be provided coal linkage, and captive coal blocks may also be provided to merchant power plants in the range of 500-1,000 MW.

Several initiatives have been taken during the last few years to promote PPPs in sectors like power, ports, highways, airports, tourism and urban infrastructure. So far, 29 proposals have been received from different central Ministries for clearance, out of which 15 proposals involving a capital cost of \$1.9 billion have been approved.

Infrastructure development has emerged as the buzzword in India, as the government realizes the importance of this key sector. Pouring money into the infrastructure sector boosts employment, transforms the economy, and generates millions of dollars in tax revenue, needed to improve social sector spending.

The Nectar of Panguru Flowers



By P. Vatsala

Translated from Malayalam by K.E. Priyamvada and K.M. Prema

P. Vatsala writes short stories, novels and essays and has twenty-eight books to her credit. A graduate in economics, she has worked as a teacher and principal of a teacher training institute in Calicut. 'Panguru Pushpathinte Taen' is a story of an individual's freedom to live his own life, in the way he chooses, in the context of his society.

Basavan lay yawning, his head on the lap of his newly-wed wife. It was almost dawn and the village was bathed in weak sunlight. The holes in the thatched roof of his hut formed square patterns in the sky. The villagers had reminded him to repair the roof before he got married. They had volunteered to provide him with material and even labour to do the job. Basavan had just smiled. He was sure that Challi would marry him whether his hut was thatched or not. People called Basavan "primitive" but in one leap he had entered the heart of this attractive woman.

Challi's blue chinnalampatti saree was crumpled. Basavan could see the

clear blue of the sky reflected in the clear pupils of her eyes. Beyond the hut, its walls, doors and the bare floor on which he slept, were the fields. Spring had opened its eyes. The colourful trees of the forest beckoned. He felt something stir within him and sat up suddenly. Challi began to get up but he caught hold of the edge of her saree. "Why do you wear this?" he asked her.

She hesitated for a moment. Her father had bought it for her. At their wedding, the bridegroom had not given anything to the bride. He did not believe in worldly goods. "What colour should I wear?" she asked finally.

"No saree suits you," he said. "You lose all your beauty when you drape a

saree around you."

She laughed at that, covering her mouth shyly, then stepped into the courtyard and went up to the banana grove to spit out the betel juice in her mouth. The trailing end of her saree moved across the ground like a blue snake.

Basavan was about to yawn again when he heard a noise. It was a beetle that had fallen through a gap in the roof. A jewel beetle, as brilliant as a gem. In the still of the hut, the sharp note of the insect cut through the unmoving silence like a saw. Challi covered her ears with her hands. "What a creature!"

"A creature?" said Basavan. "That is the messenger of the panguru creep-

er.”

The sun shone over Basavan's face. He was yawning again.

“For two days your face has been covered as if by rainclouds. You yawn at least four times an hour. Are you fed up with me in just two weeks?” she asked, teasingly.

“The panguru is blooming in the jungle. We should go there straight-away,” Basavan said, adjusting his blue checked mundu.

“Aren't you going to wear a shirt?”

“Why?”

“Someone gave you a white shirt as a wedding present. It's hanging from the bamboo rafters ... Will we leave immediately?”

“Yes. There's nothing to wait for.” All he wanted to do was leave.

The jewel beetle, which had been exploring the cool corners of the hut, now flew before them to show them the way. In the village, calves called out. The bells of the cattle on their way to graze in the forest could still be heard. With all the eagerness of a young man distributing invitations to his wedding, a breeze blew from the forest and circled the entire village. Walking with the moving clusters of clouds, Basavan and Challi crossed into the forest.

The villagers watched them leave. Challi was from the next village. They had never been properly introduced to her. So, they had no opportunity to gauge her. In fact, they had not even studied Basavan carefully. Though born in that village, he spent most of his time in the jungle. He had never observed any of the social codes of the village. He would appear at the fair of the temple festival, carrying beehives on his head. The money he earned would all be spent on toddy. And then he would disappear again. They had expected him to change after his marriage. But no, they didn't think too much about his leaving. As for Challi, she has to go with him, they said as they returned to their work. She is his wife after all!

Dragonflies flitted in the weak sunlight, like waves dancing in a sea. From a tree in the village, a bird asked them, “Where are you off to? Where are you

off to?”

“To my ancestral home. Coming?” asked Basavan.

“May I?” asked another bird.

Basavan smiled, and the smile stayed as they walked on. The forest trees raised green tattooed hands, their lush crowns swaying to greet Basavan and his wife. The cool interior of the forest was filled with the sound of countless creatures. Basavan began to hum a tune. The jungle koel stopped its song as if to listen to him.

On they walked, along the winding path, passing beneath heavily-entwined creepers, till they reached a pleasant valley. There they stood motionless for a moment. Basavan said, “It's true. The panguru is in full bloom.”

He set off in search of the panguru flowers. Challi followed, but with great difficulty, wild creepers tearing her blue chinnalampatti saree at every step.

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Dividing the dense forest into two there ran a murmuring stream. Beside it was a clearing in the forest. Challi's eyes opened in wonder as she saw the tall tani tree, entwined by a thick creeper. Bunches of flowers hung from the axil of each leaf, one or two flowers in each bunch wide open like full moons — these were the panguru flowers!

“The panguru creeper is not just any jungle creeper. It climbs all the way up to heaven. Starting at the swampy jungle floor, one can go up the leaves and the honey-filled hearts of each flower to reach the moonlit heaven.”

Basavan's mind leaped with each step he took, the countless six-legged insects cheering, as if participating in a village festivity. “This is paradise, Challi. Here we shall conceive our little one,” he announced.

They inhaled the fragrance of panguru flowers. They collected the golden honey, ate their fill and slept, forgetting all worldly cares, forgetting the humdrum routine of life in the village where they had once lived.

Beside the stream, they built a thatched hut with a leaf roof, to sleep in when it rained. They lived as two free individuals, clothed in marsh reeds, unmindful of even the changing seasons.

Challi was expecting their child. When it moved inside her Basavan said, “Come out soon. I'll feed you honey. You can catch Umbli Mamman and play with him and ride on the clouds.”

During the summer evenings they moved from the panguru valley to the grasslands. The sun and the moon were face to face in the sky above the grassland, edging it with gold. Basavan once playfully asked, “Which of these would you like our child to be like?”

Challi pointed to the sun. The moon seemed to belong to the sky. But the sun, its face flushed after the day's play, seemed as if it was lowering its tired head on to its mother's lap.

Then one day, they climbed down from the grasslands. Their child would be ready to appear by the time they reached the valley. Basavan said, “If you are a smart fellow, little one, you

will emerge soon.”

The child was born on the mud-washed floor of their shack. It made a cry shrill enough to shake the jungle. Monkeys came from the branches of trees to look at him — a newborn human baby is so helpless! It cannot even sit up or turn over on its own. But the child undisturbed by this, sucked the honey of the panguru flowers from the tip of Challi’s forefinger.

The forest accepted all this without a change in expression.

On a hammock made from about a half to a three-fourth of the blue saree, slept the child. He slept and awoke and slept again. Soon, he left the hammock to start crawling on the mattress of dry leaves. Holding on to wild, straggly plants, he learned to walk. Challi watched him with pride and wonder.

Her memory awakened only when she saw her son walk on his own for the first time.

“Basava!”

“Hmm?”

“We should return.”

Basavan was startled. He searched his wife’s eyes. She was eager to leave, he saw. Must be a mother’s whim. “Where are your cooking utensils?” he asked.

The clay utensils had turned into a hill for white ants beside the stream long ago. In the aluminium ones, ants had erected their dwellings. And an ants’ palace reached all the way up to the skylight in their shack.

“They don’t matter,” she said.

“Why do you want to go?”

“Because of the child. We shall feed it rice in the lap of Malankali, the jungle goddess, and then we will send him to the school beyond the hill.”

Basavan was shocked. “It’s just something built out of cement on top of that bare rocky hill. Our child will be a misfit there. Is that what you want?”

“That is what I want.”

With the sun, they too began to descend. They carried honey in a bamboo pole. The child sat on Basavan’s shoulders, his legs dangling over his father’s chest. He called out to wild animals and mimicked their cries. Excited, he pulled at his father’s hair.



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Basavan and Challi headed for the village along with the cattle returning to their folds. The burnt black fields were sighing. The roosting birds called out to each other. The cowherd, tired of walking, sat on the back of one of his animals, hitting it with his staff to make it run.

The village was full of tourists. They stood in groups at the crossroad before the four shacks. All four shopkeepers were respectfully asking them, “What do you want? What do you want?”

They wanted it all. Liquor, girls, a visit to the temple. They wanted a refreshing bath, a warm bed, forest honey and the joy of the beauties of nature.

It was then that Basavan appeared, the bamboo pole on his shoulder. He gave the child to Challi and stood erect before Asanaru’s shop, just a small dirty piece of the blue checked mundu wrapped around him, like an insult.

“Ellada! You’re still alive!” Asanaru exclaimed. Then he suddenly saw — his glance becoming instantly sideward — the naked Challi standing behind Basavan, the child clinging to her. Asanaru felt faint. A little boy from the tea-shop ran up to them. He didn’t feel faint.

The tourists from far and near covered them with their eyes, like bees swarming over a honeycomb. The restless child let go of his mother’s breast and began to cry loudly. The villagers came to see Challi, saying she was Malankali’s incarnation, as she stood there, clinging to Basavan’s arm like a panguru creeper. To the onlookers, she was like a dream. The crossroad was crowded, all the streets were full. Clouds peeped over the horizon. Basavan took the rag wrapped around him and wiped the bamboo pole. As he replaced the pole on his shoulder, someone asked him, “Is the honey for sale?”

Asanaru came back to his senses then. “Basava you have brought the honey for me, haven’t you?” he asked.

“No.” Basavan compared the earth with the sky. And, then, he turned his back on his village.

Ambassador visits Atlanta, Emory University, Georgia and commissions naval ship Jalashwa

Ambassador and Mrs. Ronen Sen hosted a dinner at their residence on June 1, in support of the Washington National Opera, at which Admiral and Mrs. Edmund Giambastiani, Astronaut and Mrs. Buzz Aldrin and philanthropists from different parts of the country were present.

The Sens, accompanied by Houston-based Consul General S.M. Gavai, visited Atlanta from June 3 to 6. The Ambassador was received by the Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue, at the State Capitol. Sen invited Governor Perdue to visit India.

During a visit to the premier Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Sen was briefed by the directors of various ongoing and proposed programs of collaboration between the CDC and Indian institutions.

The Ambassador delivered an address, focused on the economic aspects of India-U.S. cooperation, followed by an interactive session, at the Southern Center of International Studies on June 5.

Sen also visited Emory University, where he had useful discussions with Deans and faculty members, followed by a meeting with University President James Wagner. Sen appreciated Wagner's commitment to expanding India studies at Emory University.

Together with the Gandhi Foundation's co-founder, Subash Razdan, and Giriraj Rao, and Consul General Gavai, the Sens were taken on a "peace tour" of the King Center and historic places associated with the life of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., by Dr. Charles Steele, President and CEO, and other office bearers of the Southern Christian Leadership



Ambassador Ronen Sen with Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue. Consul General S.M. Gavai looks on.

Conference on June 6. Dr. Steele accepted the Ambassador's invitation to visit India. Ambassador and Dr. Steele placed floral tributes at the Mahatma Gandhi statue and the memorial of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King.

The Georgia Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (GIACC) hosted a reception for Sen, in collaboration with the World Trade Center (WTC) of Atlanta. Dr. Ash Thakker, Chairman, GIACC, and William Poole, President, ATC, were among the speakers on the occasion. Sen's address was followed by a brief question-and-answer session.

A highlight of the visit was a dinner in honor of the Sens and Consul General Gavai, organized by the Gandhi Foundation co-founder and Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipient, Subash Razdan, in collaboration with all major apex Indian-American associations in the State of Georgia and leading community representatives of diverse regional, religious and cultural

associations. Sen acknowledged and appreciated this manifestation of a united India-American community in Georgia.

Sen gave a keynote address on 'Doing Business with the World's Largest Democracy' during the annual Executive Conference of the GMA/FPA (food, beverages and consumer products association) at Greenbrier, West Virginia, on June 10. The GMA/FPA conference was attended by CEOs and senior executives of companies worth collectively over a trillion dollars. The Chairman's address was delivered by former President of Mexico, Vicente Fox.

Sen delivered an address to the Alaska World Affairs Council at Anchorage on June 16, after introductory remarks by the President of the Council, Sam Combs. The speech on 'India-U.S. Relations: Strategic Dimensions' was followed by an interactive session. He also paid a day-long visit to oil exploration and production sites on the North Slope of Alaska.

The Sens hosted a large dinner at their residence on June 19, in support of the Washington Performing Arts Society. On the occasion, Ms. Leanne Rees, a leading pianist and pioneer in the presentation of women composers, gave a scintillating performance of her latest release, *Crosswinds: Classical and Jazz*.

The Ambassador and Mrs. Sen hosted a reception on board the Indian Naval ship *Tarangini* at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis on June 20. The reception was attended by Vice Admiral Jeffrey Fowler, Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy, and Mrs. Fowler, Vice Admiral David Venlet, Commander of the U.S. Naval Air System, and Mrs. Venlet, Paul Hanrahan, Chairman and CEO of AES, and other senior U.S. Administration and corporate executives. Sen complimented the training ship's commanding officer, Commander Balakrishnan, on the role of *INS Tarangini* in promoting goodwill and friendship and winning the Tall Ships Race between Charleston, SC, and Norfolk, VA.

Ambassador Sen commissioned Indian Naval Ship *Jalashwa*, formerly *USS Trenton*, at the U.S. Naval Base at Norfolk, Virginia, on June 23. The ceremony was attended, among others, by Vice Admiral John Morgan, Jr., Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Vice Admiral Melvin Williams, Jr. of the Fleet Forces Command, and Rear Adm. Wendy Carpenter of the Second Fleet Command. After the inspection of the Guard of Honor by the Ambassador, remarks by the Naval Attache, reading of the Commissioning Warrant by the Commanding Officer, Capt. Ahluwalia, and the Hoisting of Colors and the Commissioning Pennant, the Ambassador delivered his address on the occasion. He said that the transfer of this ship was a symbol of the evolving defense cooperation between India and the U.S. It was a landmark occasion, since it represented the first ship of U.S. origin in the



Ambassador and Mrs. Kalpana Sen accompanied by SCLC President Charles Steele paying homage at the crypts of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta King.



Community reception in Atlanta. (From L to R): Consul General Gavai, Shiv Aggarwal, Ambassador Sen and Subash Razdan.

Indian Navy and the first landing platform docking ship in the Indian Navy. Mrs. Sen unveiled the plaque *INS Jalashwa* and carried out the traditional breaking of a coconut to mark the auspicious occasion.

The Naval Attache and Mrs. Murugesan hosted a commissioning banquet that evening, preceded by cultural performances by the local Indian

American community and the crew of *INS Jalashwa*.

After a welcome by Ron Somers and an address by U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Carlos Gutierrez, Sen made brief remarks at the inaugural session of the U.S.-India Business Council's 32nd anniversary summit held at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on June 27.

Sen gave the dinner keynote speech on June 29 during a conference held by the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) on 'Bridging Strategic Asia: U.S., Japan and India'. The other speakers at the two-day conference included the Media Advisor to the Prime Minister of India, Sanjaya Baru.

During the month, the Sens received at their residence Nobel Peace Laureate Norman Borlaug. Sen hosted a dinner for selected guests, including Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath, U.S. Commerce Secretary Gutierrez, U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab and three U.S. corporate leaders on June 27.

He also hosted a luncheon meeting between Minister Kamal Nath and World Bank President-elect Robert Zoellick on June 28. Sen also met Congressmen Tom Lantos, Ed Royce, Howard Berman, Senator Gordon Smith and other Members of the U.S. Congress, and CEOs of major U.S. and Indian companies.

■ Meet the Artist



Pandit Vijay Kichlu, Executive Director, Sangeet Research Academy, Kolkata, is seen addressing the media and other guests at the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C. Pandit Kichlu traced the evolution of the thumri from its early days to current times. (Photo: Kiran Jaggia)

Rajnikant's 'Sivaji' is a runaway hit



The hysteria surrounding the release of 'Sivaji: the Boss' in India and overseas needs to be seen to be believed but there is no doubt about who is the country's biggest superstar. Shivaji Rao Gaekwad, or Rajnikant to most people, who was never seen as a hero by the Mumbai based Hindi filmdom or Bollywood, is today the undisputed king of Indian cinema.

The film, made in Tamil and Telegu, made him richer by Rs. 160 million. This the most expensive Indian film ever. Even A-list Bollywood stars like Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan and Salman Khan charge about Rs. 90 million each per film.

'Sivaji' is the superstar's 100th Tamil film. The film is directed by Shankar and produced by M. Saravanan and M.S. Guhan of AVM Productions. It also stars Shriya Saran, Suman, Prakash Raj, Vivek, Raghuvaran, Manivannan and Nayantara. The music has been composed by the maestro A.R. Rahman.

The Rajni mania is at its zenith in the U.S. as well. Reports from the U.S. said there was rush for tickets of 'Sivaji' being screened in major cities after it was premiered in the country, where it turned out to be a crowd puller. The film was shown in places like San Jose, Virginia, and Chicago.

The only time Bollywood cast Rajnikant in an important role was in Anil Sharma's 'Farishtey', J. Om Prakash's 'Bhagwan Dada' and 'Wafadar', which were forgotten soon after. But except for his crisp Tamil accent, a Romeo-style red scarf, a cowboyish swagger, there was little to write home about his Bollywood career.

Rajnikant has come up the hard way. He used to work as a bus conductor before he discovered his talent for acting and enrolled in an "action school". And since then, there has been no looking back.

Saavn, Joost join hands to provide Bollywood hits in U.S.



Saavn, a New York-based media company offering South Asian content, has joined hands with Joost, a broadcast-quality Internet television service,

to make hit Bollywood music and movies more accessible to fans in America.

Bollywood has danced its way into American pop culture over the past year, frequently popping up in American movies, television programs, and commercials. At the same time, Bollywood music is becoming more and more popular. But until now, Bollywood music mostly has been available in neighborhood Indian shops or through clips of music videos found on the web.

Together, Saavn and Joost are changing that, Saavn, a web community and social network that brings people together based on a common interest — South Asian content — said in announcing the deal with Joost. Joost will serve the rapidly growing market for Bollywood movies and music by providing programming from Saavn's vast library on the platform. With the Saavn content being available on Joost, music fans can enjoy Bollywood music at their convenience.

Priyanka to lead India Day Parade in New York



Bollywood star Priyanka Chopra is set to lead the 27th India Day Parade as Grand Marshal in New York in August to celebrate the country's 60th Independence Day.

The annual parade, which will be held on August 19, is organized in Manhattan by the Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) and attracts thousands of people every year. It is considered the

biggest such event outside India.

Announcing details of the parade at the Indian Consulate in New York, FIA president Shobhana Patel said comedian Johny Lever would be the chief guest. The theme of the parade would be 'Women's Shakti' (power), Patel said.

Music composer A.R. Rahman, who is on a concert tour of the U.S., was present at the event. He was Grand Marshal for the 2006 parade.

First Indo-Brazilian co-production all set to roll



With Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva approving an agreement for joint production of Indo-Brazilian films, during the latter's visit to India, work is expected to start on the first venture of its kind, starring Sonia Braga — the Latin American superstar known as the "Brazilian bombshell" — who is best known outside Brazil for her role in 'Kiss of the Spiderwoman'.

Kolkata-born Indranil Chakravarty will be directing the film whereas a leading Brazilian film producer, Ana Cristina Costa e Silva, president of the Association of Brazilian Film Commissions and founder of her country's first regional film commission, will produce the new venture.

On the Indian side, negotiations are underway to cast Naseeruddin Shah and Zohra Sehgal, among others, in 'Tamarindo', the story of a Brazilian journalist who travels to Goa in search of his father. The film, to be shot in India, Portugal and Brazil, begins with the liberation of Goa.



KUMARAKOM

Backwater Paradise

The road from Kottayam in Kerala to the village of Kumarakom is picturesque, thanks to the breathtakingly green countryside it winds through. You pass sleepy village markets, paddy fields that are a smooth carpet of green, tens of thousands of coconut palms, jackfruit, teak, sal, pepper vines, small rubber plantations, and the Meenachal river — made famous by Arundhati Roy's 'God of Small Things' — flowing by for most of the journey. And, at the end of the road, the vast expanse of the Vembanad lake — five miles across and seven miles long.

Kumarakom nestles on the shores of the Vembanad, a salt water lagoon which opens out through a narrow outlet to the Arabian Sea some 80 km north at Kochi and is also fed by a network canals — the backwaters.

As recently as a decade-and-a-half ago, Kumarakom was just another sun- and rain-drenched Kerala village where nothing much happened. The huge lake made it different from other villages in the vicinity, but few other than the fisherfolk ventured out onto the Vembanad. Having grown up with the lake in the background, the resi-

dents did not give it much thought. The Kumarakom-wallah, happy with his sweet toddy and Karimeen (pearl spot fish, the tastiest in the Vembanad), did not think of exploiting the natural beauty that surrounded him.

The last decade has seen all that change. The lakefront is today dotted with resorts and hotels that suit the budgets of middle- to high-end travellers. The resorts brought with them speed boats, water-scooters and water-skiing. They also converted the huge catamarans once used to transport grain from the paddy fields to the markets in Kottayam into house boats complete with living room, bedrooms and a kitchen. These are now hired out to families for up to \$125 a day.

Apart from growing paddy — not to mention every other conceivable cash crop that can grow in the tropical climate — the main activity of the villagers is fishing. And it is this that keeps most visitors to this village busy.

Take a stroll along the backwaters and chat up one of the fishermen as he prepares to sail out onto the lake before sunrise. He will, for a few rupees, take you along for a day of fishing. The more tourist-savvy among them have made the trip a virtual guided tour of

the lake — one that also provides a fascinating insight into the many innovative ways of catching fish.

From simple forms such as angling and throwing a net, he will, if in the right mood, introduce you the art of "spearing" fish using a bow and arrow fashioned out of the skeleton of an umbrella! He will also tell you how the Karimeen, tasty though it is, is a somewhat foolish fish that is easy to catch. To demonstrate, he will, in his wake, lower a white piece of cloth a metre wide and 20 metres long. The Karimeen, on seeing the white cloth, buries itself in the slush on the bed of the lake. And the fishermen merely dive in, pick the fish up and toss them into the boat.

By about 10 am, you will be ravenous for a heavy brunch, which can be had cheap at one of the many taverns on the lakefront. A variety of fresh fish and tapioca is the staple diet for locals. But exotic fare such as rabbit meat and frog's legs are also available. All washed down with warm, sweet toddy.

The rest of the afternoon is best spent relaxing in the gently swaying catamaran as it puts up its sail to catch the wind blowing back in the direction of the village. Altogether, a happy experience. ■

■ Red Fort: A World Heritage Site



Navy personnel march past the Red Fort in New Delhi. The fort is one of the eight new World Heritage Sites named by Unesco on June 28. The Red Fort complex was built as the palace fort of Shahjahanabad, the new capital of Shah Jahan, the fifth Mughal Emperor of India, who reigned from 1628 to 1658.

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