

India Review

■ Vol. 3 Issue 5

■ www.indianembassy.org



Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Washington, D.C., on May 1. (Photo: Kiran Jagga)

Foreign Secretary Menon on visit to the U.S.

■ India puts Italian satellite in space, joins elite club of nations that launch commercial satellites

■ As India's GDP passes \$1 trillion mark, nation joins top 11 economies of the world

■ India will soon emerge as second-largest auto market in the world, says General Motors CEO Rick Wagoner

Foreign Secretary Menon in D.C. for bilateral talks and meeting of India-U.S. Global Issues Forum

Encouraged by “progress” on the bilateral civil nuclear cooperation initiative with India, U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns will be visiting New Delhi later this month with the objective of finalizing the text of the bilateral 123 agreement that will pave the way for resumption of civil nuclear trade between the two countries.

India’s Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon held discussions with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Burns on May 1 and 2 to resolve key issues. Discussions also took place on India-U.S. bilateral relations and exchanges of high-level visits, as well as on regional and international issues.

Both sides appeared positive about the prospects of an early conclusion of the 123 agreement, named after Section 123 of the U.S. Atomic Act.

“We still have some issues to settle. But we will settle them soon,” Menon told journalists on May 1. “We have had a productive discussion with U.S. officials and there has been considerable progress on the issue. We would



Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon addressing a press conference at the Embassy of India on May 1. At left is Ambassador Ronen Sen.

be expecting Burns in India later this month where we hope to continue the discussions,” he said.

Menon did not give a specific timetable for the deal to be inked, but said instead that both sides would like to settle all outstanding issues and finalize the agreement as soon as possible.

“I am not willing to say where we stand today as regards to when the document will finally be signed,” he said. “What I can say is that there is a lot of

keenness on completing this deal soon.”

“The discussions were positive and the United States is encouraged by the extensive progress that was made on the issues,” State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack said in a statement.

“We look forward to resolving the outstanding issues in the weeks ahead. In that regard, Under Secretary Burns will visit India in the second half of May to reach a final agreement,” he added.

Highlights of the meeting of India-U.S. Global Issues Forum

Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon led the delegation in a meeting of the the U.S.-India Global Issues Forum on April 30 at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula J. Dobriansky led the U.S. delegation.

The U.S.-India Global Issues Forum, which convenes annually and alternates between New Delhi and Washington, D.C., was initiated in New Delhi in October 2002.

The two delegations engaged in productive discussions on working together to address global challenges.

They examined new and expanded areas for U.S.-Indian cooperation.

Those areas included issues related to the promotion of democratic values and human rights, protection of the vulnerable, and environmental conservation and sustainable development.

The deliberations explored increased coordination of efforts, including through multilateral organizations, to strengthen democratic principles and institutions worldwide.

The two sides also discussed continued and new cooperation on protecting the global environment, and underscored the importance of ongoing collaboration in science and technology and public health.

Later, addressing a press conference, Foreign Secretary Menon said: “In the forum, we discuss issues of global significance, things like democracy, environment, and climate change.”

On their deliberations, Menon said: “We have discussed HIV/AIDS, for instance, and these are areas where, over time, we have found several areas of congruence where we can work together. We’ve developed several projects. For instance, the idea of the U.N. Democracy Fund – we first discussed it – it first came up in this forum.”

India-U.S. Private Sector Advisory Group is formed

Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath and U.S. Trade Representative Susan C. Schwab on April 13 announced the formation of an India-U.S. Private Sector Advisory Group (PSAG). Schwab was in Delhi to co-chair, with Nath, a meeting of the India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum (TPF) with Nath.

The forum was established during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's 2005 Washington visit as the primary mechanism for working together on the policies and regulations that will enhance the India-U.S. bilateral and trade investment relationship.

The PSAG takes the process forward. According to Nath, it will consist of prominent U.S. and Indian global trade experts. The body will act as a mechanism to promote communication between the Trade Policy Forum, the private sector and other stakeholders.

"The Private Sector Advisory Group, being an independent think-tank, will prove to be a valuable channel for giving the private sector perspective and a new dimension to the ongoing dialogue which will provide a fillip to U.S.-India bilateral trade and investments," Nath said.



Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Kamal Nath addressing an Interactive Session on 'Indo-U.S. Trade and Investment: The Agenda for Growth', in New Delhi on April 13. At right is U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Susan C. Schwab.

The Minister noted with satisfaction that the TPF had proved to be a unique bilateral mechanism and that there has been fair degree of progress in resolving issues. He noted that the Focus Groups on Agriculture, Tariff & Non-Tariff Barriers, Services, Innovations & Creativity and Investment were having regular meetings and have identified various bilateral trade issues of interest, as also monitoring progress on each of these issues on a regular basis.

Indian experts on the PSAG include Dr. V. Krishnamurthy, Chairman, National Manufacturing Competitive Council; Dr. Isher Judge Ahluwalia, Chairman, Indian Council for Research on International Economic


Relations; R. Sheshasayee, President, Confederation of Indian Industry; Habil Khorakiwala, President, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

U.S. representatives PSAG include Ambassador Carla A. Hills; C. Fred Bergsten, Director of the Pete G. Peterson Institute for International Economics; John J. Castellani, President of the Business Roundtable; and Ron Somers, President, U.S.-India Business Council.

The U.S. is India's largest trade partner, accounting for 16.83 percent of India's exports and around 6.34 percent of its imports. While U.S. exports to India have grown by over 35 percent in 2005-06, India's exports to the U.S. have shown a growth of over 26 percent. With the trend of increased trade volume continuing, India and the U.S. are confident of achieving the TPF's objective of doubling India-U.S. trade in three years time, Nath said.

USTR Schwab also attended the G4 and G6 Ministerial meetings on the Doha Round hosted by the Commerce and Industry Minister Nath on April 12. Trade negotiators — Ambassador Schwab, EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson, Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim and Minister Nath — held bilateral and group meetings on April 11-12, on the sidelines of the TPF meeting.

Schwab also called on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on April 11 and discussed a host of bilateral issues.

She also visited West Bengal and called on Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on April 14 and invited him to visit the U.S. Earlier, Schwab visited Fritto Lay company and said that it gave her an opportunity to know about contractual farming and the challenges of subsistence farming. 

Delegation led by Congresswoman Nita Lowey visits India

A Congressional delegation led by Congresswoman Nita Lowey visited India during April 5-12. The delegation visited New Delhi, Rajasthan and Mumbai.

The team visited the slum dwellers in Mumbai and Jaipur and attended a meeting on an HIV/AIDS program in Mumbai. The HIV/AIDS Challenge Program at the Salvation Army in Mumbai is an important initiative in addressing these conditions and enhancing local and global security. In the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) meeting, a host of issues were discussed including outsourcing.

The delegation also called on Foreign Secretary and special envoy on the U.S.-India nuclear treaty Shivshankar Menon in New Delhi and discussed the energy issues. In Jaipur they visited a slum called Triveni Colony where USAID funds are being utilized for community development programs.



Congresswoman Nita Lowey, Chairperson, Foreign Operations Sub-Committee in the House of Representatives, addressing a CII luncheon meeting with senior Indian business leaders in Mumbai.

India-U.S. Aviation Partnership Summit

A three-day India-U.S. Aviation Partnership Summit was held in New Delhi from April 23 to 25. The summit was inaugurated by Minister for Civil Aviation, Praful Patel, Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Marion Blakey, Secretary, Civil Aviation, Ashok Chawla and Deputy Director of the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), Leocadia Zak. The objective of the summit was to encourage high-level discussions between the U.S. and the Indian aviation sectors regarding industry growth challenges. The summit provided an opportunity to help build long-term strategy and commercial relationship between the two countries to address important issues like air traffic management, air-



Minister for Civil Aviation Praful Patel lighting the lamp to open the U.S.-India Aviation Partnership Summit, in New Delhi on April 23.

space utilization and commercial collaborations in new airborne systems.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister for Civil Aviation, Praful Patel said that in the last three years the U.S. India relationship in civil aviation has

been building on a new note and partnership.

Patel said that India for the next 10 years would enjoy a compounded growth of about 25 percent in the aviation sector, which will be sustained for the next 10 to 15 years.

Speaking about the U.S. he said that it is only with there that India enjoys total Open Skies — “which shows that we want to take the U.S.-Indian relationship to a much greater height, and what better way than in the field of aviation”.

A Memorandum of Understanding was also initialed at the inaugural of the summit. It was signed by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, R.K. Singh, and USTDA's Leocadia Zak.

Indian mangoes arrive in the United States

After 18 years since the first Indian request to the U.S., the first consignment of Indian mangoes shipped from Mumbai arrived in the U.S. on April 26. Since this issue figured in discussions during the visit of President George W. Bush to India in March 2007, concerted joint efforts were made by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Commerce in India and the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other U.S. agencies to open the world's largest market for mangoes to the world's biggest producer of mangoes. Minister of Commerce & Industry Kamal Nath hailed the market access of Indian mangoes to the U.S. as “a major breakthrough that augurs well for Indian agro-product exports”.

At an event organized by the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) on May 1, USIBC President Ron Somers said the U.S. decision to import mangoes was “another important step towards deeper engagement and more robust U.S.-India trade”. Ambassador Ronen Sen thereafter handed over baskets of the newly arrived mangoes to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns and U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab. Sen thanked them both for their personal interest and “hard work which had borne fruit figuratively and literally”. He also expressed his appreciation of the positive role played by the USIBC. Recalling that India was not only the world's largest producer of mangoes, accounting for 52% of the global production, but also the most diverse pro-



From left, Ambassador Ronen Sen, USTR Ambassador Susan C. Schwab and Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns enjoying the first mangoes to arrive in Washington, D.C., on May 1. (Photo: Kiran Jaggia)

ducer with over 1,000 varieties, Sen said that the arrival in the U.S. of what was regarded even in republican India as the “fruit of kings and king of fruits”, would truly give Americans “quite literally the flavors of India”. He added that the resolution of an issue which had been pending for decades within about a year was a symbolic and substantive manifestation of the new spirit of cooperation between the two countries in recent years.

Agriculture Secretary Johanns recalled his very successful visit to India. He remarked that he was struck by the capacity crowd and great enthusiasm at the USIBC's celebration of the arrival of the mangoes in the U.S. He said this was an indicator of the vast scope for expanding U.S.-India bilateral trade. Johanns noted that “the important point to be made is when our two countries work together we can accomplish great things”.

Ambassador Schwab also spoke with warmth of her visit to India in April. She said that the access of Indian mangoes to U.S. market represented more than the market opening for one product but the determination of both the U.S. and India to “forge deeper and stronger trade ties and create significant new economic opportunities for people in both countries”. She echoed Sen's remarks and said that the event was indeed the “fruit of our labor and I wish that all our trade discussions will bear fruit like this”. She referred to the opening of the Indian market to U.S. almonds, and added in jest that “she would have been nuts not to mention that”.

U.S. Defence and Civil Services officers visit India

A 16-member U.S. Financial Services and Industry Study Group led by Dr. David G. Blair, Professor of Economics, National Defense University, Washington, called on Union Railways Minister Lalu Prasad on May 1 in New Delhi. The delegation comprised of mid- and senior-level officers from the U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force and Civil and Foreign Service officers. The discussions centered round the recent turnaround in Indian Railways.

The Minister informed the visiting delegation that Indian Railways is the lifeline of the country. He told them that the



Union Railway Minister Lalu Prasad with the U.S. Financial Services Industry Study Group delegation led by Dr. David Blair when they called on him in New Delhi on May 1.

turnaround had been possible because of strong determination and a vision for the development of the railways, increase in occupancy of trains, more number of coaches, etc. The passenger and freight traffic rates were rationalised and a flexible tariff policy was adopted for peak and non-peak seasons.

The turnaround in the railways has resulted in a surplus of Rs. 200 billion during 2006-07. The Minister informed the delegation that the mis-

sion of the Indian Railways is to construct Dedicated Freight Corridors, modernization of track and signals, manufacture of low weight wagons, among others.

U.S. Navy chief Admiral Michael Mullen visits India

Close on the heels of a series of naval exercises conducted jointly by the Indian and U.S. navies in the Pacific Ocean (codenamed 'Malabar 2007'), U.S. Navy chief Admiral Michael Mullen visited India recently. His visit is indicative of the growing defense ties between the two countries. Mullen, who is designated chief of naval operations (CNO), was accorded a guard of honor at the South Block defense headquarters in New Delhi, after which he held discussions with Defense Minister A.K. Antony and Defense Secretary Shekhar Dutt.

Indian Navy chief Admiral Sureesh Mehta conducted a detailed briefing for Mullen. He met Indian Army chief,



Gen. J.J. Singh, and Indian Air Force chief, Air Chief Marshal Fali Major.

Mullen also visited Mumbai and inspected the naval establishments in the city. Mullen's is the latest in a series of high-powered visits by U.S. civil and military officials.

U.S. Pacific Fleet chief, Admiral Gary Roughead; the chairman of the Joint Chiefs Of Staff, Gen. Peter Pace; and the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force Bruce S. Lemkin are among those who have visited India in recent times.

Earlier this month, the global and regional security environment figured prominently during the first meeting of the India-US joint working group (JWG) on defense.

■ First India-United States-Japan Trilateral Naval Exercise



The ninth Indo-U.S. joint naval exercise, codenamed Malabar 07-1, was held off the coast of Okinawa, Japan, in conjunction with an Indian Navy port visit to Yokosuka, from April 6 to 11. More than 6,500 U.S. Navy Personnel took part in naval exercise.

The naval exercise is a key element of the Pacific Fleet's schedule and aimed at increasing interoperability between the Indian and U.S. navies.

The Japanese Navy joined the Indian and U.S. fleets for their first trilateral exercise on April 16.

Gross Domestic Product crosses \$1 trillion

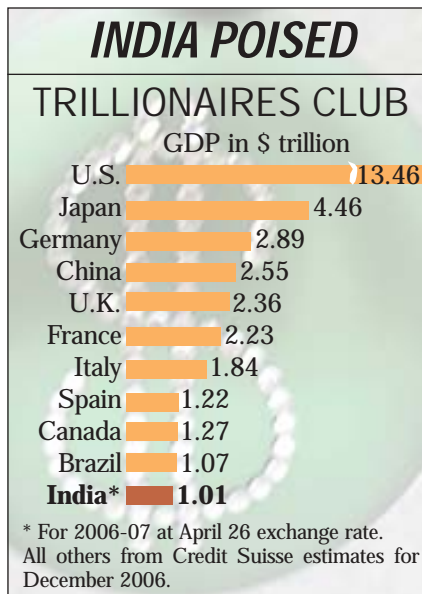
India has joined the elite club of 11 countries with a trillion dollar economy.

The country's GDP crossed the trillion-dollar mark for the first time in history when the rupee appreciated to below 41-level against the U.S. greenback on April 25, Swiss investment bank Credit Suisse said in a report.

Countries like the United States, Japan, Germany, China, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain, Canada, Brazil and Russia have all breached the trillion-dollar GDP level in the past.

The bank put the country's GDP at around Rs 41,000 billion which translates to slightly more than one trillion dollar at the current currency level of Rs 40.76 per dollar.

Besides, the country's stock market



capitalization has risen to \$944 billion, which is also closing fast on the trillion

dollar level, it added.

The rupee has gained close to 13 percent since moving past 47 a dollar in July-August last year.

Continuing its uptrend for the fifth day in a row, the Indian currency on April 26 rose to as high as 40.72 to a dollar after breaching the 41-level the previous day to its highest level since May 1998.

Before the rally began about a month ago when the rupee was hovering at 45 to a dollar, the country's GDP was estimated at around \$900 billion.

India becoming a trillion dollar economy also augers well for the country's stock market, as Credit Suisse report said that stock markets in eight out of ten countries had risen in the one year after their economies first crossed this mark.

India to grow at 9 percent in 2007

India's economy is expected to grow by 9 percent in 2007 as against 9.2 percent in the previous year despite concerns of overheating, rising rupee and slowdown in United States, according to a new report brought out by the United Nations.

Presenting the findings of the report, U.N. Under Secretary General Kim Hak-Su said services and industrial production would be the key growth drivers.

He said while oil prices were expected to be \$60 per barrel as against \$65 per barrel in 2006, inflation in India would come down to 5.0 percent this year from 6.0 percent.

Lehman to pump in \$300 million in R&D SEZ

The United States-based investment bank and global financial services giant Lehman Brothers is close to making its first major investment in India.

The fund is looking to invest nearly \$80 million in the Bangalore-based 404 hectare research and development (R&D) Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Gandhi City.

ILFS Investment Managers, the private equity arm of IL&FS, is also looking to co-invest \$20 million in the SEZ along with Lehman Brothers.

Reports say that \$80 million may be only the first phase of Lehman's investment.

Lehman Brothers may, the reports added, eventually invest up to \$300 million in the SEZ, in two tranches. It is, however, not yet known when the remaining \$220 million will be invested.

Rupee is Asia's most performing currency

In recent times, the rising rupee is generating immense interest among traders in offshore markets. With hedge funds overseas taking short positions on dollar, but holding on to longer positions on rupee, treasury managers contend that the movement in the local currency is being substantially driven by offshore triggers apart from local reasons.

Bankers admit that the rupee is gaining increasing relevance in overseas markets and is slowly becoming a currency to reckon with, even outside Indian borders. The rupee has clearly outpaced most other Asian currencies due to strong capital inflows and is currently regarded as Asia's most performing currency against the dollar.

According to a senior treasury manager with a private sector bank, "Within Asian markets, it is only the Indian rupee and the Chinese yuan which are outperforming other curren-



cies. Now this is largely an outcome of the fact that other currencies like the Singaporean dollar, the Taiwan dollar and the South Korean won do not have to deal with the challenge of large foreign exchange inflows."

Taking a longer-term perspective, market players believe that, if the rupee becomes fully convertible, it has the potential to become the most powerful Asian currency.

According to global market strategists, there has been a sudden surge of interest in the Indian currency and this is nudging traders to look for opportunities in India.

New trade policy sets export target of \$160 bn

Commerce Minister Kamal Nath has set a target of \$160 billion in merchandise goods for this year and extended some fiscal sops to services exports in the annual update of India's foreign trade policy.

Unveiling the updated policy, which runs from 2004-09, Nath also said that the duty entitlement passbook scheme, an incentive package that is popular among exporters, would be extended till a new format comes into force in March 2008.

"When the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government assumed office in 2004, our merchandise exports were \$63.84 billion. In the year ended March 2007, the exports surged to \$125 billion," Kamal Nath said.

"We have crossed many milestones to emerge as a major trading nation. In this background, the merchandise export target of \$160 billion is being set for the current year 2007-08 and \$200 billion for 2008-09," he added.



"This upward revision in our goal should not be difficult to achieve, given our strong economic fundamentals, the entrepreneurship of our exporting community and the collective resolve of the government, trade and industry," he said.

"Ninety-two special economic zones have been notified to date and 50 of these are at various stages of implementation," the minister

said, adding these projects had attracted Rs.135 billion in investment with Rs.400 billion more in the pipeline. Kamal Nath also announced that the scope of the 'focus product and focus market scheme' was being enhanced with more items under it and a step up in the fiscal allocation to Rs.10 billion from the existing Rs.6.5 billion.

He said the foreign trade policy would continue to be guided by the main aim of making exports oriented toward inclusive growth with special incentives for farm products, handlooms, handicraft, cottage industries and jewellery. ■

Essar Global buys Canada's Algoma Steel for \$1.8 bn

Indian conglomerate Essar Global's wholly owned subsidiary Essar Steel Holdings Ltd. has recently announced its acquisition of Canada's Algoma Steel, Inc. for \$1.8 billion in an all cash deal.

According to an agreement signed between the companies in Canada on April 15, Essar would be able to obtain the shares of Algoma Steel after the latter undertakes a necessary court approval.

"We believe Algoma is an excellent addition to our existing steel business and also offers growth potential. This acquisition fits in with our global steel

vision of having world class low cost assets, with a global footprint," Shashi Ruia, chairman of Essar Global Ltd, said. "Algoma provides us with an excellent platform for the Canadian and North American markets," Ruia added.

However, the acquisition will be completed after the meeting of shareholders of the Canadian

firm, which will take place in June. According to the board of directors of Algoma Steel, the shareholders would vote in favor if the acquisition.

UBS Investment Bank is acting as the exclusive financial advisor to Essar and sole arranger of Essar's transaction financing.

Essar Global, which operates in areas such as steel, oil and

gas, power, communications, shipping and logistics and construction, is expecting revenues to the tune of \$10 billion by the end of 2007-08.

"The board of directors unanimously supports the Essar proposal as it reflects a significant premium to the historical share price of Algoma," said Benjamin Duster, chairman of Algoma's Board of Directors.

Algoma Steel, which emerged from bankruptcy protection in 2004, had achieved a turnover of \$1.9 billion in 2006. The company's products are sold in Canada and the U.S. as well as overseas.

Essar Global buys Minnesota Steel

Essar Global acquired Minnesota Steel, a U.S.-based company with iron ore reserves of 1.4 bn tone. Essar would pay around Rs. 3.5 bn for the acquisition. Minnesota Steel is setting up an integrated steel plant with an annual capacity of 2.5 mn tone with an investment of \$1.65 bn by making use of its iron ore mines.

U.S. depository likely to buy 5 percent stake in BSE

The U.S.-based Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation (DTCC) is planning to pick up 5 percent stake in the Bombay Stock Exchange. The other contenders are Temasek and The Government of Singapore Investment Corporation, a subsidiary of the Singapore government. The price the entities would pay is Rs. 5,200 a share — the same paid by Deutsche Borse and Singapore Stock Exchange.

DTCC is a leading U.S.-based depository and clearing house. Its keenness in picking up stake in the Indian stock

exchange stems from the fact that the BSE also has a clearing corporation.

Globally, only a few exchanges have such in-house clearing and settlement facilities. DTCC has many other plans for the Indian securities business.

It is planning to sign memoranda of understanding with Indian depositories for exchange of information. Once the pacts are signed, domestic depositories hope to get the custodian business of foreign institutional investors in India. Currently this business is only with a few foreign custodians.

U.S. firms asked for 'roadmap' to trade

The U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) has asked 22 Washington-based professional lobbying firms specializing in U.S.-India trade to develop a "roadmap" for trade and investment in India.

Included in the initiative to lead the two countries towards a successful Doha conclusion and eventually a free trade agreement — potentially the largest ever negotiated — is Patton Boggs, a firm championing the U.S.-India civilian nuclear advocacy program for the USIBC.

"USIBC's greatest contribution to free-market democracy in the coming years — consistent with securing a successful conclusion to the Doha Development Round — will be to prepare and execute a 'roadmap' that



USIBC President
Ron Somers

supporting free trade and investment in a socially-sustainable manner. The ultimate goal is to create the freest feasible trade and investment climate between the U.S. and India, one which

charts the course towards a Free Trade Agreement between the U.S. and India," said Ron Somers, USIBC president

"The ultimate goal is to unleash market forces

protects respective national interests and is most-importantly inclusive," he said.

The USIBC has asked the 22 companies to send in their proposals by May 15 with contract award to occur by June 15 — in time for USIBC's 32nd Anniversary 'Global India' Summit on June 27.

The summit will feature Indian Commerce Minister Kamal Nath, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez, Indian Ambassador to the United States Ronen Sen, Reliance Industries Chief Executive Officer Mukesh Ambani, Boeing's Chief Executive Officer Jim McNerney, and Warburg Pincus President Chip Kaye, among others.

AOL launches trendy India portal



American Online (AOL), a division of the \$44-billion Time Warner, recently launched its India portal to offer next generation e-mail service with unlimited storage and spam blocking.

As AOL's first web site — *www.aol.in* — outside the U.S. and Europe, it offers a host of web services such as instant messenger, Google search, videos, channels like Bollywood, CityGuide, education, international music and access to mobile devices for e-mails.

"Our next-generation e-mail service is the first of its kind being offered worldwide on AOL even before its introduction in the U.S. and Europe," AOL president and chief operating officer (COO) Ron Grant told reporters in Bangalore. Besides regular features, the portal provides users a wide range of content, including video and special channels dedicated to news, movies, cricket, sport, Hollywood and an online advice from experts in all walks of life under the Guru channel.

Having entered India five years ago, the global web services firm has a software development centre in Bangalore to develop applications and products, a knowledge centre for business analysis, search operations, technology support and a call centre.

Mumbai, Delhi realty price growth tops world list



Mumbai and Delhi have witnessed the second and third fastest growth in real estate rentals across the world in 2006. At 50.2 percent and 33.3 percent, respectively, they are next only to Me'ouyan Soreq in Israel, which has seen an 87.5 percent increase. According to

Cushman & Wakefield's annual report on Industrial Space Across the World, two other Indian cities, Bangalore and Hyderabad, figure in the top 12 with rental jumps of 25 percent and 23.1 percent, respectively.

According to the study, in terms of industrial rentals, New Delhi has moved nine places to 14th position. Cushman & Wakefield executive MD (South Asia) Sanjay Verma attributes this jump to the boom in the manufacturing sector.

"Manufacturing is undergoing a renaissance in India. As export volumes are rising rapidly, the sector is becoming increasingly attractive. This is backed by the availability of private capital, strong domestic demand and a large pool of skilled and unskilled labor. The central government is continuing with its legislative reforms and infrastructure improvements," he says.

U.S. company to invest \$6 billion for hotels in India

The U.S.-based real estate developer Royal Indian Raj International Corporation (RIRIC) will invest \$6 billion in India over the next seven years to develop hotels and residential resorts.

"Initially, we would develop three types of projects in India — Royal Garden City, Royal

Garden Villas as well as hotels chains, for which we have planned an investment of \$6 billion," RIRIC chief executive officer Manoj C. Benjamin said. There is a huge shortage of hotels and housing infrastructure and this needs to be addressed, he said.

According to a study, India's hotel sector is

facing a shortage of 110,000 rooms. The government has allowed 100 percent foreign direct investment in the hotel sector.

"Institutional investors have shown interest in funding our projects in India and we are planning an IPO in New York or London," Benjamin said.

India to be 2nd largest auto market: GM

Indian manufacturing costs are extremely competitive and among the lowest in the world, even as this country is poised to become the world's second largest market in less than a decade, according to General Motors chairman Rick Wagoner.

"This is not just because of low wages but also because of the Indian attitude that abhors waste," Wagoner maintained in an interactive session in New Delhi.

"The growth will be driven by overall economic growth, rising disposable income and a rapidly expanding middle class," he added.



GM CEO Rick Wagoner with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), the Automotive Components Manufacturer's Association (ACMA)

and the American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) organized the event. Wagoner said that over the next 10 years, emerging markets within the Asia-Pacific region alone are expected to account for nearly 70 percent of global sales growth. "Three of the top five fastest growing auto markets over the next decade are going to be in Asia-Pacific including India," he contended.

Wagoner attended the interactive session immediately after a meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during which he pledged GM's full participation in India's economic growth.

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National Policy on Petrochemicals

The Union Cabinet recently approved the National Policy on Petrochemicals Document. It provides for the constitution of a Petrochemical Technology Upgrade Fund (PTUF), setting up of a Plastic Development Council, a Task Force on Petrochemical Feedstock to suggest measures to ensure the availability of petrochemical feedstock at internationally competitive prices and setting up of future cracker complexes. The policy further envisages the setting up an Inter-Ministerial Expert Committee to recommend the use of plastics in the thrust areas as mandatory.

FDI touches \$15 bn in 2006-07

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows in the country jumped nearly three-fold to \$15 billion in 2006-07 as the world's second-fastest growing economy lured investors from across the world. Buoyed with the surge in FDI flows, Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath on April 14 said the government has set a target of attracting \$25 billion of investment in 2007-08. "Last fiscal, FDI touched \$15 billion as against \$5.5 billion in 2005-06," Nath said at a CII interaction with Japanese Trade Minister Akira Amari. "If reinvested earnings are taken into account, FDI in 2006-07 totaled \$18 billion dollars as against \$7.5 billion in the previous financial year," he added.

Dell president Rollins visits India

Leading computer manufacturer Dell will increase its headcount in India to 10,000 by the year-end and spread its wings to other cities. Dell currently had a manpower of 7,000 spread across Bangalore, Hyderabad and Mohali in Chandigarh and is looking at few other cities for expansion.



Company President and Chief Executive Officer Kevin Rollins, who visited India last month, reviewed Dell's performance in India, said Dell Inc. plans to increase the number of staff at its Indian call center and software development operations to 10,000 by the end of the year, he told reporters in Bangalore.

Dell stopped routing some technical calls from corporate customers to India in late 2003 after receiving complains about poor quality of service.

Virginia business delegation in India

An 80-member business delegation led by Patrick O. Gottschalk, Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Commonwealth of Virginia, visited India from April 22 to 24. Virginia governor was supposed to come but dropped out due to Virginia Tech massacre. Meetings and events promoting trade and investment between Virginia and India were held in New Delhi, Chennai and Mumbai. Global logistics, agriculture, infrastructure, technology, and research and development were the main focus areas of discussion. They met business leaders and held meetings with Federation of



Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). U.S. exports to India via Virginia reached \$93.46 million in 2006, an increase of 16 percent. Industrial and electrical machinery were the main export sectors. During the visit, FICCI and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership signed an MoU to promote trade and economic cooperation.

Boeing CEO's visit

W. James McNerney, Jr. Chairman & CEO of the Boeing Company, visited India on April 4 and 5, 2007. Boeing is supplying 68 aircraft to Air India under a contract valued at \$8.2 billion. Boeing is also supplying aircraft to Jet Airways. Boeing has announced setting up of a Maintenance, Repair and Operations (MRO) facility in Nagpur, the first of its kind in Asia. McNerney called on the Prime Minister. He also met the Minister for Civil Aviation, Commerce & Industry Minister and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission during his visit to India.

INDIA STEEL INDUSTRY on high growth curve



The steel industry has been making waves globally of late, with steel tycoons like L.N. Mittal — the India-origin London-based entrepreneur — and other Indian industrialists making strong bids for global steel giants.

Mittal acquired arch rival Arcelor for \$32 billion after a five-month-long battle. Tata Steel, the country's leading private sector giant, has formally acquired the U.K.-based Corus for about \$12.2 billion.

The acquisition, the biggest-ever by an Indian firm, will catapult Tata Steel to being the world's fifth-largest steel maker, from its current position of 56th. The flagship of the Tata group will see its total production capacity multiply to 25 million tones a year, from 5.6 million tones at present.

Indian steel tycoons are also eagerly eyeing other foreign steel companies, and analysts expect them to make their moves soon, acquiring firms around the globe. The ensuing months will see a lot of action in the unfolding steel saga, riveting global attention.

Domestically, the industry — already the seventh largest in the world — is steeling itself for new challenges, as India charts an ambitious growth path, aiming to emerge as a global leader in steel.

The government has set an aggressive production target of nearly 200 million tones of steel per annum by 2020, up from the present 41 million tones. The earlier target of 110 million tones, implying a compounded annual growth rate of 7.3 percent has recently been revised, following a sharp spurt in production (10 percent growth) and

consumption (12 percent).

The National Steel Policy envisages an investment of over \$50 billion in the sector over the next 15 years. India is today the seventh largest steel producer, but per capita consumption of the metal is low — 35.3 kg, as compared to a world average of 183 kg, and far higher averages in the U.S. (418 kg).

For the first time in the history of independent India, the country has emerged as a net exporter of foreign capital in financial year 2006-07, which ended March 31, 2007.

But the next 10 to 15 years should see dramatic changes in India's steel consumption and production pattern. According to the International Iron and Steel Institute (IISI), India's steel consumption is expected to grow by 10 percent this year, as against a world average of less than 5 percent. Between

2010 and 2015, global steel demand is expected to grow annually by 4.2 percent, in China by 6.2 percent, and in India by 7.7 percent.

With India's gross domestic product (GDP) expanding by over 8 percent annually for the past three years (it grew by 9.1 percent during the first half of 2006-07), demand for steel will naturally soar. Sectors like infrastruc-

ture, construction, automobiles and engineering, which are major consumers of steel, are witnessing record growth rates.

The construction sector accounts for 43 percent of steel demand in India, followed by the mechanical engineering sector (32 percent) and automobiles (5 percent). The three growth drivers for the steel industry have also been experiencing explosive growth in recent years. The automotive sector, for instance, has seen 16 percent annual growth in production between 2000 and 2005. The mechanical engineering sector has seen a 10 percent annual growth rate during the same period, and construction of 6 percent.

One of the largest investments in the steel sector being made is by South Korea's Posco, one of the world's major steel-makers, which has unveiled plans for a 12 million tone steel plant near Paradip in Orissa, at a cost of over \$12 billion. Posco is also exploring other states, including

Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh could set up large-scale steel production facilities mainly for export purposes at a cost of about \$20 billion. Other Korean steel firms, including Korean Iron & Steel, are also looking at India for setting up plants.

Mittal Steel is also eager to invest in steel plants in these states, but wants to lease out the mines before committing to invest. The company has signed an MoU with the Orissa government for a 10 million tone plant, and is considering the option of a similar project (with



The National Steel Policy envisages an investment of over \$50 billion in the sector over the next 15 years. The Government has set an aggressive production target of nearly 200 million tonnes of steel per annum by 2020, up from the present 41 million tonnes.

a \$4.5 billion investment) in neighboring Jharkhand.

Tata Steel itself plans to invest over \$15 billion in these three minerals-rich eastern states, adding 23 million tones to its existing capacity of five million tones. The company is investing \$3.5 billion for a six million tone plant in Orissa, \$9.5 billion for a 12 million tone plant in Jharkhand and \$2.25 billion for a five million tone plant in Chhattisgarh.

According to B. Muthuraman, managing director, Tata Steel, India is among a few countries having the dual advantage of fast-growing domestic demand coupled with access to raw materials. "The trend that is already discernible is that the axis of global steel production/ consumption is shifting towards Asia," notes Muthuraman.

With their large populations, China

and India already account for 35 percent of the total world steel production — more than double that of Europe. Asia is expected to outpace other regions of the world to an even greater extent in the coming years.

While admitting that China will continue to be the leader in global steel — the country accounts for 35 percent of global steel production of 1.1 billion tones,

and 32 percent of its consumption — Muthuraman points out that India is slated to emerge as the second Asian giant in the next 10 years.

"It is sunrise time for India where the demand has increased by 7-8 percent in the last couple of years," he says.

In the long run, Indian steel is likely to be more cost-effective since unlike China, India has relatively large reserves of iron ore, which, if strategically exploited, can sustain domestic production of 120-130 million tones for at least 25-30 years.

The government has also cleared the proposal of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd. (RINL), the holding company of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, to increase liquid steel capacity from three million tones to 6.3 million tones at a cost of nearly \$2 billion. RINL, together with other public sector giants, is also considering acquiring mines in South America and Africa, and even importing raw materials.

The steel industry is a capital-intensive one, and setting up a greenfield project costs about \$1,000 a tone to set up an integrated steel plant, and with minimum competitive-sized plants being around 1.5 million tones, investors have to plough in at least \$1.5 billion for an average plant.

India will emerge as the strongest market in the world between 2010 and 2015, when demand will grow annually at 7.7 percent, outstripping China's consumption of 6.2 percent, says the IISI.

India launches Italian satellite, joins elite club

India has joined a select group of nations with capabilities to launch commercial satellites when it put an Italian astronomical satellite into orbit from the space centre in Sriharikota. The white and magenta polar satellite launch vehicle PSLV-C8 lifted off into the clear blue sky from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at 3.30 p.m. local time on April 23.

Shortly thereafter, it placed the 352-kg AGILE satellite from Italy into orbit to catapult the country into an elite group of just six nations that have the ability to launch commercial satellites.

What was also significant about the launch was that a European nation had picked the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) for the launch ahead of more experienced players like France and Russia that between them have launched over 800 space missions. The U.S., China and Japan are the other nations with similar capabilities.

ISRO chief G. Madhavan Nair described the launch a "very dutiful, perfect and accurate". He said: "This is a historic moment not only for us but also for the European scientific community



because the satellite will uncover the secrets of the universe."

"The launch is also cost-effective and on time. This is also a remarkable entry for us in the commercial field," Nair said.

Giovanni Dignami, president of the Italian space agency ASI, said: "It is an extremely important achievement for our country and the entire space community. I am proud to be standing here. This marks a new beginning of a new era of collaboration among Italy, Europe and India."

AGILE will conduct x-ray and gamma-ray astronomical tests in an effort to decode the secrets of the universe. This is a first for not only Italy but also for India, which has hitherto only launched weather or remote sensing satellites.

India's prehistoric mathematical astronomers had mapped space as early as 7 B.C. without the aid of telescopes, rockets and space vehicles. While most of these texts are yet to be juxtaposed with the modern space idiom, it would be interesting to see as to how the Italian scientists fare with modern implements.

India tests 'fire and forget' missile Agni-III

Indian scientists successfully tested a fire-and-forget Agni-III ballistic missile on April 12. Fired from the Wheeler Island in the Bay of Bengal on India's eastern coast, the missile reached its designated target in the Indian Ocean in 15 minutes, proving the success of the made-in-India propulsion and guidance system, Ministry of Defense (MoD) spokesman Sitanshu Kar said.



Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and two naval ships monitored the flight path.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Defense Minister A.K. Antony, Minister of State for Defense Pallam Raju, Defense Secretary Shekhar Dutt and Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) head M. Natarajan congratulated the team of scientists behind the test.

The test was "an impressive illustration of the indigenous capacity developed by our scientists and technologists in mastering strategic high technologies essential for maintaining the nation's defense and security", the Prime Minister said in his message.

Antony said the "Agni-III test has confirmed India's strategic capability for a minimum credible deterrence".

The 16-metre Agni-III weighed 48 tons and carried a warhead of 1.5 tons.



India test-fires BrahMos cruise missile

India on April 22 test-fired the land version of the nuclear capable supersonic BrahMos cruise missile from a military base in Orissa.

The missile was tested from launch complex No. 3 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) of Chandipur in the coastal district of Balasore, 230 km from Bhubaneswar, at 11.21 A.M.

The missile has a range of nearly 300 km and carries a conventional warhead of 300 kg. It can achieve speeds of up to 2.8 Mach or nearly three times the speed of sound, military sources said. The supersonic missile jointly developed by India and Russia takes its name from the Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers.

India to set up space science institute

India, an acknowledged power in space science, will launch from the next academic year an Indian Institute of Space Science & Technology (IIST) with an initial investment of Rs.2.70 billion (\$66.5 million) to address the manpower shortage faced by the national space agency.

The Union Cabinet recently gave its approval for the setting up of IIST that will have an annual recurring cost of Rs.400 million, Information and Broadcasting Minister Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi told reporters in New Delhi.

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has been experiencing severe shortage of highly tal-



ented graduate and postgraduate scientists and engineers during the last few years to take up the challenges of research and development in the areas of space science and technology, an official statement said.

The setting up of the IIST, on the lines of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), will provide high-quality undergraduate and postgraduate education in space technology and science and postgraduate and research programs and integrated Masters in Space Science degree with

customized curriculum meeting the high technology requirements of ISRO mitigating the problem of acute shortage of quality human resources the agency faces, it said.

Pending development of the regular campus of the institute, the courses will commence from the academic year 2007-08 itself on an alternate campus in the premises of the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram.

The institute, to come up within 24 months, will be located close to the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre and Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre in Thiruvananthapuram to enable close interaction with ISRO, the minister said.

India develops first floating desalination plant



India has developed a floating desalination plant — the first of its kind in the world — off the Chennai coastline. With a capacity of one million liters per day, it will prepare fresh

water from ocean water to address the acute potable water shortage in coastal India.

The plant has been developed by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT).

“Mounted on a barge, the plant would provide much better potable water to any state along the coastline. The floating plant can serve any mainland where deep sea water is available 30 km-40 km off the shore,” said Kapil Sibal, Minister for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences recently.

“The total cost of the plant was about Rs.220 million. At present it’s costing us just six paise to produce one litre of water. The plant would start its regular operations in early 2008,” Sibal said.

He said the water quality would be much better than what is available today.

ISRO to sponsor students for global aeronautical meet

Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) would sponsor 50 Indian students to participate in the International Astronautical Congress (IAC-2007), to be held in Hyderabad on September 23-28. The congress is being organized by the International Astronautical Federation in support of the International Academy of Astronautics and International Institute of Space Law. It is a prestigious international space event, to be attended by about 2,000 delegates. Students of 11th and 12th standards, undergraduate students who have already completed their first year in science, engineering or law courses and post graduate students of science, engineering and law will be eligible for selection.

60 Indian techies in Google’s Summer of Code

Sixty Indian youngsters have bagged selections at the prestigious Google Summer of Code competition.

The Google Summer of Code is an annual program, first held in 2005, in which the Internet-search and online advertising giant based in Mountain View, California, awards cash prizes to students who successfully complete a free software or open-source coding project.

“This time there are 60 Indians (accepted among the over 900 students who made it from a pool of nearly 6,200 applications),” said sources following the event closely.

Last year too, the Google Summer of Code had mentors from India, such as the lawyer-turned-software guru Kenneth Gonsalves and Anand Avati. This year there are Indian mentors such as Baiju M. and Sankarshan Mukhopadhyay of open source firm Redhat.com.

Baishampayan ‘G0SUB’ Ghose, a young geek who was also involved in the project last year, says the “overall experience was great”.

“I have been involved with the free software community for quite some time, so the whole idea of working on a free software project was not new,” Ghose said.

Loganathan, Minal victims of Virginia Tech massacre

India-born American Professor G. V. Loganathan and Indian student Minal Hiralal Panchal were among the 32 people killed by Seung-hui Cho, a South Korean student, in the Virginia Tech massacre on April 16, the worst-ever in the recent U.S. history.

Loganathan was a Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, part of the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech. He is survived by his wife, Usha, and his two daughters, Uma and Abirami.

Loganathan hailed from Karatadipalayam of Gobichettipalayam Taluk in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. He completed his M. Tech. at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. He joined Virginia Tech on December 16, 1981. He was an active member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and Associate Editor of the *Journal of Hydrologic Engineering*, with expertise in the area of stochastic hydrology.

Minal Panchal, 26, who had been missing after the gunman went on a shooting spree at the Virginia Tech University, was confirmed dead by the Indian Embassy in the U.S.

Minal Panchal, who was pursuing masters in building science, was in the Norris Hall when the shooting took place in the Blacksburg town university.

Minal's family, which is from Mumbai's western suburbs of Borivili, was in the U.S. at the time. Neighbors at her fifth-floor apartment in Borivili West's Park View residence said Minal's mother left for the U.S. two weeks ago while her elder sister



Kavita is married and lives in the U.S.
Minal completed schooling from

Mumbai's Our Lady of Remedy High School at Poinsur in Kandivili in 1996. After gaining a science degree from Mithibhai College, she studied at the Rizvi College of Architecture in Bandra.

An ardent fan of Ayn Rand's 'The Fountainhead', Minal chose to follow in her father's footsteps and become an architect. To her friends and former classmates, she was an intelligent and friendly girl.

"She left for the U.S. in September 2006 and was based in Blacksburg in Virginia," said Neeta Bhivankar, a childhood friend. "She was a brilliant student and warm and friendly. She always wanted to excel academically and wanted to make it big in the field of architecture. I just can't believe Minal is no longer there. We had been fearing the worst ever since the news of the massacre. We had been in touch on the Internet and it was only last week that I had chatted with her. Who would know that I'd lose her so soon and so cruelly?" asked a tearful Bhivankar, who had known Minal for 12 years.

Nine members of Professor Loganathan's family (who was a U.S. citizen with Overseas Citizen of India status) were provided passports from the Passport Office in Chennai, so as to allow them to attend his funeral.

Thereafter, they were issued visas by the U.S. Consulate in Chennai. Ticketing arrangements were also made by the Passport Office and the tickets were paid for by the Government of Tamil Nadu. The Embassy of India, Washington, D.C., made arrangements to receive the family in the U.S.

Funerals of victims of massacre

Ambassador Ronen Sen, accompanied by Counselor Rahul Chhabra, attended the funeral of Indian citizen, Minal Panchal, at Odenton, Maryland, on April 21. The solemn function was attended by a large gathering of family members, friends, the Dean and faculty members and students of Virginia Tech. After placing a wreath, Sen conveyed the condolences of the Government and people of India. He also read out the text of a condolence letter addressed to Minal's mother, Mrs. Panchal, by Congress President and Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), Sonia Gandhi, who had also sent a separate personal condolence message to Mrs. Loganathan.

The Ambassador was represented by Minister (Community Affairs) Anil Gupta at the function on the same day and around the same time of late Indian American Professor G.V. Loganathan.

Immediately after the tragic and traumatic events, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Sen had addressed letters to Governor Timothy Kaine of the State of Virginia and Dr. Charles W. Steger, President of Virginia Tech, expressing their shock as well as sympathy and solidarity with the bereaved families. In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, Minister (Community Affairs) Anil Gupta and Minister (Consular) Krishan Varma, were at the campus, meeting university, police and local administration officials and reassuring Indian students of the Embassy's full support. Subsequently all logistic and other assistance was extended to the members of the bereaved families of Ms. Minal and Prof. G.V. Loganathan.

Sunita Williams ran Earth race from space

Sunita Williams on April 16 created history, when the Indian American astronaut ran the Boston Marathon while in orbit, 210 miles above Earth.

Williams circled Earth at least twice, running as fast as eight mph but flying more than five miles each second, as she completed the Boston Marathon on a station treadmill. Her official completion time was 4:23:10.

The Boston Athletic Association had issued Williams bib number 14,000. The bib had been sent electronically to NASA, which had forwarded it to Williams. She's a Needham, Mass., native and says her reason for running



the marathon is simple. "I would like to encourage kids to start making physical fitness part of their daily lives. I thought a big goal like a marathon would help get this message out there."

Regular exercise is essential to maintaining bone density while in space for astronauts.

"In microgravity, both of these things start to go away because we don't use our legs to walk around and don't need the bones and muscles to

hold us up under the force of gravity," Williams said.

Williams, an accomplished marathoner, has been training for months while serving a six-month stint as a flight engineer in space. Williams qualified for the marathon when she ran a 3:29:57 in the Houston Marathon last year. Race organizers say this will be their first satellite venture, and they are thrilled about it. "Suni running 26.2 miles in space on Patriots' Day is really a tribute to the thousands of marathoners who are running here on Earth. She is pioneering new frontiers in the running world," said Jack Fleming of the Boston Athletic Association.

Suriname girl is Miss India Worldwide

Fareisa Joemmanbaks of Suriname was crowned Miss India Worldwide 2007 at a dazzling beauty pageant held in New Jersey on April 10. There were 19 contestants from as many countries, including India and the U.S., at the contest organized by the India Festival Committee (IFC).



and lives in Suriname's capital Paramaribo.

The evening gown, Indian dress (*sari*), talent and question-answer rounds were interspersed with regular song and dance entertainment show-

casing local talent. The show banked heavily on current popular Bollywood numbers like 'Bidi', 'Kajra re' and 'Crazy kiya re'.

Fareisa, 17, is a student of tourism

Emmy for Krishnan, Kakati



Indian American television program host and moderator, Sukanya Krishnan, won television's highest honor, an Emmy, all on her own at the 50th anniversary awards of the New York Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences at the Marriott Marquis, Times Square, on April 1. This was Krishnan's second Emmy. In 2006, Krishnan won her first Emmy for On-Camera Achievement (News Anchor/Host). She has also won the Indian American Political Awareness Committee's 'Creating A Voice' Award.

Another Indian American, Buboo Kakati, shared an Emmy, as a member of the writing team for a composite program 'Secrets of New York' aired on November 30, 2006, on NYC TV. Kakati directed two short films in 2003 — 'Off-Duty' and 'The Nearly Unadventurous Life of Zoe Cadwalder', which won the *The New York Times* Critics Award.

The New York Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, founded in 1955, is the preeminent membership organization serving the television industry.

Nooyi bags U.S. award



Chief Executive Officer of PepsiCo Indra Nooyi has bagged the American By Choice award for her outstanding achievements as a naturalized American citizen.

Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Emilo Gonzales presented her the award at a function in

Washington recently. Nooyi, who was named one of the most powerful businesswomen in 2006 by the *Fortune* magazine, was honored with the Padma Bhushan — India's third highest civilian award — by the Indian government.

The Chennai-born Nooyi received her post-graduate diploma in management from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta and graduated from the Yale School of Management. Prior to joining PepsiCo, Nooyi started her career with the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), from where she moved on to hold senior management positions at Motorola and Asea Brown Boveri (ABB). Nooyi is also a Successor Fellow at Yale Corporation and serves on the board of directors of several organizations.

5 Indian Americans win Guggenheim Fellowships

Five Indian Americans are among the 189 artists, scholars and scientists who have been awarded the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowships this year.

Salil Vadhan, an associate professor at Harvard, Sanjeev Khanna, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Arjun Heimsath, assistant professor at Dartmouth College, author Suketu Mehta and composer Rudresh Mahanthappa were selected on the basis of distinguished achievement and exceptional promise, a press release said.

WATER PLAY

By Perumal Murugan

Perumal Murugan is a well-known contemporary Tamil writer with a doctorate in Tamil literature. His writing focuses on life lived on the margins of society, both rural and urban, he experiments a great deal with prose styles. He has published four books, *Aeruveyyil* and *Nizhal Muttram* (novels), *Nigazh Uravu* (poems) and *Tiruchengodu* (short story). 'Water Play', originally titled 'Neer Vilayattu', is a story based on the fact that fear has a tendency to suddenly disturb and distort thought, action, relations and everything else. In the story, he has depicted how fear wields its power in magnifying the danger and drowns all feelings except the intense desire to save one's life at any cost.

At first he was somewhat confused when they invited him. "Me?" he whispered disbelievingly. But then desire and eagerness blossomed and his dull thoughts cleared to reveal the radiance within. The children urged him on. He was a guest there, though actually a close relative. He did not let the fact that they had seldom met stand in the way. In a short while, the children, three of them, between the ages of 8 and 12, a girl and two boys, had begun to roll and tumble on his lap to the extent that they were now willing to include him in their play. This was the main impetus behind their invitation.

He was aware of a mild sensation of excitement, an arrested thought that now surfaced and animated him. But it was not possible to rise and walk away at once. Tender thread-ends of hesitation still bound his legs. He looked about eagerly. His breath stopped, his voice refused to rise.

The children began to plead with him, their eyes squeezed shut, tapping his chin and pulling at his hands as a matter of right. As he moved to avoid them, the cot on which he sat creaked loudly. He feared that a voice with a "Don't trouble him, children!" reprimand would now be raised, stemming their assault, as they besieged him, begging and pleading that he join them. It would be better to leave with them before that happened, it seemed. Feigning disinterest, as if this was the biggest problem facing him, he said, "I don't have a towel." They jumped up



eagerly, each running to different parts of the house, to return with a towel. He rose with a shy smile.

In the heart of the forest, redolent with scents of greenery, the well burst into sight suddenly, as if it were the earth's mouth split wide open. It possessed neither a proper wall nor a uniform shape. Rough with holes, its walls had the appearance of flesh pock-marked by boils and wounds. The impressions left by frequent footsteps, seeming to serve as steps, were also visible. Sunrays shining through gaps in the palm-fronds pierced the surface of the water to reveal the muddy depths of the well. It was certainly the kind of well that enticed one to jump in.

The children were fighting amongst

themselves, arguing over who would jump in first. Being first to take the plunge was most important. It was necessary to splutter the water once and effect the sound of waves set in motion. First the frozen silence of the well had to be broken and only then would the fury of enthusiasm take hold of each of them. It was initiating this process that seemed such a problem. There was fear that the well waited to accept as sacrifice the one who jumped in first. The dispute between the now unclothed children prolonged. While their attention was engaged thus, he jumped into the well with the suddenness and force of a ripe coconut falling off a palm tree. They too jumped in at once from each corner of the well.

The children had fixed spots from which they were wont to climb up the walls by clinging to its stones. They jumped in and out continuously as if their only aim was to disturb the water.

He experienced the well very differently. He swam, paddling the water gently, as though holding a newborn infant against his chest. The uneven form of the well gave him great happiness. The water's coolness was balm to the body in the heat of a sunny hour. He relished dipping his head into the water, then floating on his back.

The scattered rays of the sun sought him out as he swam. The well was a great store of wonders, he understood this little by little and a deep affection for it budded within him.

He desired to touch and embrace every part of it. He journeyed for long, eyes fixed on the sides of the well where

dust particles floating on the water had collected. The well seemed to have created small niches at each corner that provided places of rest. There were step-like structures where one could stand for a short while. The well was full of graciousness. At the corners there was the chill of agreeable dew. Eager to know the depths of the well, he began to move towards its floor. In those few seconds, at the centre of the well, he suddenly felt as though he'd journeyed a long distance and caught a glimpse of his innermost being.

The well continued — over space and time. And all at once he felt breathless. Growing immediately aware of where he was, he pressed his hands together to come up for breath. There were so many mysteries that the well contained. Would it unravel all and offer them to him, who came to it occasionally, in just a few minutes? He reprimanded himself for the foolishness of putting himself out in vain. Sitting on the stone slabs near the steps he relaxed, gazing with new wonder at the frogs that either clung to the walls as the water lapped against them. It seemed as if he had become, for a short while, a mere spectator.

The children, however, were not a bit tired. They continued to climb the sides of the well without bothering about its sagging walls and took turns to jump in. The well was like an old man, smiling gently, indulgently, at their childish enthusiasm. As the little girl leaned forward to jump, she looked, with the ends of her plait undone, ribbon flying in the breeze, and the glitter of the bright sun on her, like a little goddess descending into the loving arms of the well. The boys were too quick in their act of climbing and jumping to be distinguished from each other.

The enchanting breeze that embraced his body spread a chill. Beads of water ran down his body to merge with the water in the well. His body was now dry and had begun to tremble. The chill that he had not felt as long as he was in the water plucked at him. In truth, this was the well's ruse. A way of enticing a person to enter again. Anyone who had entered it once

was beguiled into going in again and again. He lunged into the ripples. The warm water caressed his skin and embraced him. He circled the well without even realizing he had done so. He wanted to circle the well once more. But before he could, the little girl turned to ask, "Chithappa ... how many times can you go round the well without stopping to rest?"

He was unable to come up with a number. He tried to gauge the dimensions of the well. Its cornerless spread made it difficult. He smiled to hide the fact that he had no answer.

But she would not leave him alone. "Can you complete ten rounds?"

One of the boys replied, "Chithappa can hardly complete two."

Though he understood that the boy was teasing only to get a rise out of him, he could not help responding to the challenge. It was decided that starting from the steps, touching each corner and returning to the steps again would make one round.

He had circled the well once and was halfway through the next when his breath weakened. He began to gulp in air through his mouth. He found his hands were tiring and his legs refusing to cooperate. However much he tried he could not go on. The well had defeated him once again.

He stood at one end, his body bent with exhaustion, breathing hard. The noise that the children made as they

His eyes squeezed shut to avoid the light that pierced through the water. With difficulty, he tried to peer through the spray. His sight filled with scenes he could not comprehend and he panicked. There was no escape apart from scaling the walls of the well and running to his freedom.

crowed over him blocked out the fear that the well would be overjoyed at his defeat. His embarrassment was increased by his bashfulness. He wanted to climb out of the well. No one could outface the monstrous well. One was forced to accept defeat before its mammoth proportions. Even to confront and be defeated by it asked for daring. He drew a deep breath, filled with pride and swam towards the steps. On reaching the steps, he dipped himself in the water, tilting his head to slick back his hair and taking advantage of its wetness to comb it down. Then he said, "I'm going out. You can play for a while longer if you like."

This direction must have come as a shock to the children. The sound of waves lapping against the sides could be heard for a few seconds. Sorrow shadowed the girl's face. The boys looked woebegone. They could not accept that the delights of the well had to be given up so soon. If he were to climb out of the well, they would have to do so too. They did not have permission to remain in the well without an adult. The well contained innumerable dangers. Old poisonous snakes that reared their heads and emerged at evil moments lurked in the recesses of the upper portions of the well. There were hidden currents that trapped and sucked in underwater swimmers. An adult might manage to escape such a siege of dangers, but could a child? Besides, the well, surrounded by tall palms that stood guard over it, had acquired a quality that was inhospitable to human beings. Voices echoed in all directions. A terrifying silence was lodged permanently in the darkness of the water. It wouldn't do for him to leave the well when he was the shield that protected them against these dangers. The little girl entreated.

"No, Chithappa ... for some more time, Chithappa."

But now her entreaty did not move him at all. He was firm in his decision to leave the well at once. He took a step forward disdaining her pleas with a smile.

The little girl who had been standing at the eastern end of the well, now

jumped in and gliding across the water gripped his legs tightly. "Don't go, Chithappa," she implored, shaking her wet, flattened plait. He had not expected this. Her hands had twisted themselves around his legs and clung to them, snake-like.

"Let go, child ... let go," he said.

He thought these ordinary words would suffice. But she did not release him. She was bent low, as if prostrating herself before a deity, determined not to let go until her wish was granted. He was nonplussed. Still hesitant, he bent carefully to try and prise her fingers free. But they tightened further.

"Don't you let go of Chithappa," came a voice from somewhere. Even then he merely smiled cautiously at what seemed the stubbornness of childish play. In an unguarded moment, the girl's hands pressed to push him into the water. He fell headlong into the water — splash — like a loose stone dropping off the well's wall with sudden force. The water whipped at his stomach sharply. Fear sent cold shivers down his body. With much effort he managed to swim towards the step. This too seemed like a defeat before the well. Wanting to deny it, he spoke calmly as he went up the steps,

"Why did you do that, child?"

But now the topmost step was no longer one to him — on the stone jutting out of the wall stood the bigger of the two boys. Waving his outspread arms the boy yelled out, "I'm not going to let you go." As he lifted a leg intending to scale the wall, the boy bent to grab him by the neck. Both fell into the well. Dragging the boy into the water, he pressed his legs and gave a powerful shove; free again, he swam with great speed towards the steps. He pushed aside the girl, who had been waiting, aiming at clasping him around the neck, and bounded up the steps.

"Ei!" A loud and enthusiastic scream came out of nowhere as the other boy pounced on him. This was completely unexpected. He fell into the water again. His eyes squeezed shut to avoid the light that pierced through the water. With difficulty, he tried to peer through the spray. His sight filled with

scenes he could not comprehend and he panicked. There was no escape apart from scaling the walls of the well and running to his freedom. But above the steps was another boy. A kind of order had suddenly developed amongst them: One to battle with him in the water; one to prevent him from ascending the steps by seizing his legs; and another to swoop down upon him from a height. They had conquered each of those places by turns. They encircled him like a thick chain which he could not break.

How long was this play going to continue? What kind of a game was this? This play was a trick of the well. He was not here as a guest at someone's home. It was the well that had impelled him to come. No one had invited him for a swim. It was the well that had given form to its messengers and sent them to fetch him. The origin of illusion and deceit, the well was a death trap. He began to hear the sound of approaching death. He was a prey in the gluttonous mouth of the well. How mistaken he had been in thinking them children. They were really three devils sent by the well's witchery.

The first lunged, aiming at his neck. The second seized hold of his legs. And the third caught and grappled with him in the water to pull him into its depths. Their laughter was an invitation though it sucked his life out. The little devils were now ravenous with hunger. How could he make his escape?

The gaps in the walls of the well now transformed into dark caves where death lurked. The water felt like acid that burnt his skin. Did he possess the strength to swim and prevail over these innumerable dangers? Tadpoles clung to the sides of the well, their eyes protruding, their mouths wide open, ready to drag him down any minute. They would pounce when the devils tired.

Fear spread to every part of his body and entrenched itself. He could not think of a way out. Though the compulsion to get out and run was foremost, he was thrown off-balance each time. His stomach was swollen with the water he had gulped in. His body trembled and sweated, but he paid it no

attention. All his concentration focused on escape. It seemed as if their intent was to gradually crush and swallow him. As he struggled with death, eyes wide open, he was filled with animal rage. He beat at the devils as they came to hand. He thrust his legs against the floor of the well. But their violence increased correspondingly.

This infernal pit must have other escape routes. He jumped towards a corner. But he was unable to stand. His legs trembled. Sweat, more than water from the pool, dripped from his body. They, thinking that his move to the corner signalled victory, whooped with joy.

His probing eyes caught sight of the motor pump. Even as his eyes fell on it, his hands lunged towards it. Holding on to the pipe, he began to slip-climb to the top. He realized that this could serve as the only possible way out. Struggling hard against the slippery surface of the pipe, he continued to climb. But though he swayed to and fro, he could not progress at any great speed. The fiercest moment of the game held them in its grip. These last moments would decide victory or defeat. As he continued to climb, a howling figure, with a confused tangle of limbs descended the pipe with great speed and dashed against him. His hold broke and he hit the water again.

This was it. The game was over. It was as if all else had been ordained. He began to babble incoherently. His hands continued to thrash the water without interest. He could no longer recognize the direction he should move toward.

He no longer understood where to find a hold. Many things escaped his grasp. His trembling legs climbed on to something. Was it one of the walls of the well. His hands seemed to cling to the edges of some jutting stones. He felt he had climbed a little higher. But the belief ripened only to fade away. The well raised a voice that echoed — "Snake, Snake!"

His hands lost their grip. Mouth wide open, arms and legs spread-eagled, he fell into the water backwards, like a frog.

5th Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles a big draw

The fifth Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA) was inaugurated last month with the screening of the film 'Provoked'. The festival's aim was to highlight films from India as well as films about India and films by Indian directors. IFFLA also showcased films that reflect the diverse perspectives of the Indian diaspora.



A scene from 'Provoked'; and IFFLA Director Christina Marouda

The 2007 line-up featured 36 films (13 features, eight documentaries and 15 shorts) and included three world premieres, 11 U.S. premieres and 16 LA premieres.

The festival is both a product and a cause of the tremendous growth in interest in Indian filmmaking in the U.S., said Christina Marouda, Director, IFFLA. "In the last year, there has been tremendous growth and awareness of Indian cinema in the U.S.," she added. "It's tremendously exciting but very busy."

That's not just self-serving hype. The year 2006 was a

record-breaking year for Hindi films at the U.S. box office — seven of the 14 foreign language films that grossed over \$2 million were Hindi movies. Hindi films were even more popular than Spanish films, which only had two movies gross more than \$2 million, despite the huge number of Hispanics in America.

This rise in popularity has coincided with the growth of the festival. It was launched in 2002, just as 'Lagaan' and 'Monsoon Wedding' became breakout hits in mainstream U.S. cinemas.

But those landmark movies don't fit the Bollywood stereotype, nor does the rest of the IFFLA line-up. Take the opening movie 'Provoked', for example. It's no sugary melodrama, but a searing examination of a case that redefined the seriousness of spousal battery in British courts, when a Punjabi woman fights for her freedom after being imprisoned for the murder of her abusive husband.

U.S. honor for India-born Anant Singh



South African-Indian filmmaker Anant Singh was honored with the prestigious Career Achievement Award at the 12th Annual Palm Beach International Film Festival (PBIFF) on April 23. The award puts Singh in the league of such celebrated film personalities as producers Robert Evans ('Chinatown', 'Urban Cowboy'), Richard Zanuck ('Jaws', 'The Sound of Music') and directors William Friedkin ('The Exorcist') and Robert Wise ('West Side Story', 'Star Trek').

Announcing the award, the executive director of the festival, Randi Emerman, said a special tribute was paid to South Africa with the screening of films produced by Singh.

Among the South African films screened during the festival were the Oscar-nominated 'Yesterday', dealing with the triumph of a rural black woman who fights off the stigma of HIV/AIDS; the multi award-winning 'Red Dust', which is based on the reconciliation after apartheid; the hit comedy 'Mr. Bones', which found great favor in India recently; and the stylish gangster film 'Dollars and White Pipes'.

Mira Nair named for 'PRIDE OF INDIA' award

Filmmaker Mira Nair, whose acclaimed movies include 'The Namesake' and 'Monsoon Wedding', will be honored as the 'Pride of India' at a Bollywood awards show in New York. The award will be presented by the Bollywood Group — which hosts the show annually — on May 26 in New York. Nair said: "The brilliant thing is that there's room for all of us — for four-hour Bollywood extravaganzas and for my independent work — because we come from a place whose heart is as big as the ocean."



Shah Rukh at Madame Tussauds

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan became the latest Indian to be featured in the Madame Tussauds museum when his life-size wax statue was unveiled in London on April 3. Shah Rukh is the third Indian actor to figure in the popular tourist attraction — after Amitabh Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai. The actor was present with his family when his statue was unveiled. The statue was sculpted by Stephen Mansfield. The decision to have a wax model of King Khan was based on feedback received from thousands of visitors and tourists who visit the museum featuring prominent personalities every year.



Ambassador hosts dinner for U.S. CNO, top executives of *Fortune*, visits Columbia and Yale University and southern Florida, Miami

Ambassador and Mrs. Sen hosted a dinner at their residence on April 2 in honor of Admiral Michael G. Mullen, U.S. Chief of Naval Operations, and Mrs. Mullen, prior to their official visit to India later in the month.

Sen was a keynote speaker on the AIG Keynote Panel on 'U.S.-India Economic Relations' at the commencement of a day-long 'India Business Conference 2007' organized by Columbia University on April 6.

Following the opening address by University Professor Jagdish Bhagwati, the panel members, including the Ambassador, CII Chief Mentor Tarun Das, AIG Vice Chairman Ambassador Frank Wisner and USIBC President Ron Somers, addressed the conference, followed by a question-and-answer session. The panel was moderated by Columbia University Professor and Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz.

Speakers at the latter sessions of the conference included former Union minister Arun Shourie, CEO of 'Orange' Sanjiv Ahuja, former U.N. under secretary general Shashi Tharoor and founder and CEO of SKS Microfinance Vikram Akula.

After opening remarks by T.N. Srinivasan, Samuel C. Park, Jr. Professor of Economics, Ambassador Sen delivered the Keynote Address on 'The Future of U.S.-India Relations', followed by questions and answers, at the inaugural session at a Symposium on 'U.S.-India Strategic Relations' held at Yale University on April 13. Speakers at following sessions during the day included Professor Karl F. Inderfurth of George Washington University (who strongly advocated India's permanent membership in the U.N. Security Council), Ambassador

Teresita Schaffer of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Columbia University Professor Jagdish Bhagwati, Princeton University Professor Atul Kohli, Stephen Cohen of the Brookings Institution, Francine Frankel, Founding Director of the Center for Advanced Study of India of the University of Pennsylvania and Neelam Deo, Consul General of India in New York.

Sen, accompanied by Neelam Deo, separately met Yale University President Richard C. Levin and discussed various initiatives and activities of the University on India.

Sen hosted a dinner at his residence for top executives of *Fortune* magazine, including publisher Michael Dukmejian, Managing Editor Andy Serwer and International Editor Robert Friedman, and leading business executives on April 19. USTR Susan Schwab was among the dignitaries present. This was a curtain-raising event to the Fortune Global Forum to be held in New Delhi from October 29-31.

Sen hosted a reception for office-holders and members of the Washington International Trade Association at his residence on April 24, and gave a talk on India-U.S. trade and investment ties, the Doha Round and the process of economic reforms in India.

The Ambassador and Mrs. Sen, accompanied by S.M. Gavai, Consul General of India in Houston, paid a visit to southern Florida from April 25-27. He met Mayor Pam Iorio in Tampa, and a reception was hosted in his honor by the Tampa/Hillsborough International Office, the Indo-U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Tampa Port Authority, where the second-largest destination of cargo is India. They were hosted to a dinner with


prominent persons by Dr. and Mrs. Kiran Patel.

In Miami, the Ambassador and Consul General were hosted to a well-attended reception hosted by Mrs. Madhu Mehta, Chair of the local Indo-American Chamber of Commerce. Thereafter, a dinner was hosted in their honor by Dr. Piyush Agarwal, National Coordinator of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO), at which a large cross-section of prominent Indian Americans and leaders of Jewish, Hispanic and other communities were present.

The Ambassador was the Chief Guest at the 25th Anniversary Banquet and Award Ceremony of the Association of Scientists of Indian Origin in America (ASIOA) in Washington, D.C., on April 30.

In his address, Ambassador Sen highlighted the fact that most of the recent initiatives aimed at transforming India-U.S. relations into a mutually beneficial strategic partnership, both bilaterally and globally, were technology driven.

After addresses by ASIOA President, Dr. Parimal Chowdhury, Banquet Committee Chair, Dr. Ghanshyam Pandey, and Awards Committee Chair, Dr. Gabriel Fernandez, a Keynote Address was delivered by Dr. Neil Granger, Chair of the Department of Molecular and Cellular Physiology at the Louisiana State University, who also fielded several questions. Thereafter, Sen presented awards to past Presidents of ASIOA on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee and also the 2007 awards to selected scientists.

Sen had meetings during the month with some U.S. Senators and Congressmen and also CEOs of some major U.S. companies. 



◀ Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Ambassador Raminder Singh Jassal addressing the group of students from American University doing their International Studies programme when they visited the Embassy on April 18. (Photo: Kiran Jagga)



▶ Ambassador Jassal addressing Professors and educators from Indiana University at an event organized in the Embassy on April 11. Also seen in the picture are Gautam Bambawale, Minister (Political) and Manoj Joshi, Counsellor (Economic). (Photo: Kiran Jagga)

■ A Seminar and a Concert

Kellogg School organizes seminar on 'India: Gateway to Growth'

A seminar on 'India: Gateway to Growth' was organized on April 12 at the Kellogg School of Management's Chicago campus. The U.S.-India Chamber of Commerce Midwest, which is headed by Ram Thukkaram, played an important role in coordination with Thomas A. Panek, President, World Trade Center, Chicago. The aim of the seminar was to promote business awareness between the smaller and middle-level companies in the U.S. and India which constitute about 90 percent of the business between two countries. The seminar was sponsored by leading American companies and the State Bank of India, Chicago. The Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) also participated in the seminar. Consul General, while inaugurating the seminar, made the opening remarks.

Sri Venkateswara Swami Temple organizes concert

The Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee of Sri Venkateswara Swami (Balaji) Temple organized a charity concert where Ghazal maestro Padmashree Hariharan performed on April 7. The concert was organized to collect funds for construction of additional rooms in the adjoining area of the temple for conducting classrooms and providing additional parking in the temple complex. A large number of community members attended the function. Consul General was also invited and attended the concert.

■ Events Round-up

Website of World Hindi Conference launched

The logo and website for the 8th World Hindi Conference were launched on April 23 in New York by Minister of State for External Affairs, Anand Sharma, at a function organized at the Consulate General of India.



Anand Sharma inaugurating the website in New York. Also seen is CG Neelam Deo (at left).

The Minister addressed a gathering of over 100 guests, including print and electronic media, representatives of Hindi organizations and prominent Indian com-

munity members. He informed the audience about the 8th World Hindi Conference that is scheduled to take place in New York from July 13 to 15. He highlighted the significance of holding the event in New York, which is not only a global hub of international business, commerce, finance and media, but also the headquarters of the United Nations and a true melting pot of diverse cultures, languages

and ethnicities. Recognizing the significance of language in the development of any nation, the Minister stated that even though India is a multi-lingual country, Hindi acts as a unifying force. Following his address, the Minister launched the website.

The 8th World Hindi Conference is being organized by the Government of India in cooperation with the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and other Hindi organizations based in the U.S.

Details of the conference program are available on the newly launched Conference website at <http://www.vishwahindi.com/index.htm>

Memorial Service for Chandralekha



The Consulate General of India, New York, the Asia Society and the Arch Foundation jointly hosted an event on April 6 to celebrate the life and creative passion of the visionary choreographer and dancer Chandralekha. The program commenced with a performance of one of the pieces choreographed by Chandralekha by noted dancer and Director of The Arch Foundation, Sridhar Shanmugam, who was a lead dancer with Chandralekha for many years. Rachel Cooper, representative of the Asia Society, in her opening remarks recalled Chandralekha's work, ideas and concepts which challenged the prevailing notions of classical dance in India.

In her speech, Consul General of India Neelam Deo recalled Chandralekha's visit to Denmark during her tenure as Ambassador.

Carmen De Lavallade from the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre, and Jonathan Hollander, Director of the Battery Dance Company, also recalled her.

Book on the Taj Mahal is launched

In association with the Austrian Consulate in New York, the Consulate General of India hosted a Talk and Presentation of a book titled 'The Complete Taj Mahal and the Riverfront Gardens of Agra' by eminent author Ebba Koch on April 23. Ebba Koch is an internationally acclaimed architectural historian, currently working as a Professor in the Institute of Art History at the University of Vienna. She has been the Advisor to the Taj Mahal Conservation Collaborative since 2001 and is considered the leading authority on Mughal architecture. Koch using her own photographs, maps and architectural drawings explained the aesthetic context of the Taj Mahal.



Ebba Koch

The invitees included Director for Cultural Politics Foreign Ministry of Austria and Consuls General of Bangladesh, Czech Republic and Romania.

Both Austrian and Indian media were present and covered the event.

UP Association bids farewell to CG



The Uttar Pradesh Association of Greater Chicago hosted a special Hindi Kavi Sammelan in honor of Consul General Arun Kumar to bid farewell to him on his retirement. On the occasion, Subhash Pandey, on behalf of the association, honored and thanked Consul General for his profound services to the Indian community in the Midwest during his tenure and wished him well in all his future endeavors.

Profile of Arun Kumar

A career diplomat for more than 30 years, Arun Kumar has served in Italy, Tunisia, Ghana, Zaire, Dubai, Milan and Yugoslavia. He was Consul General of India in Dubai when the war between Iraq and Iran took place. He was Ambassador of India in Zaire when Mobutu Sese Seko was the state leader. As a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, he was involved in policy planning framework and was doing coordination with all 22 Indian universities reorganized by the University Grants Commission.

MADHYA PRADESH: The heart of India

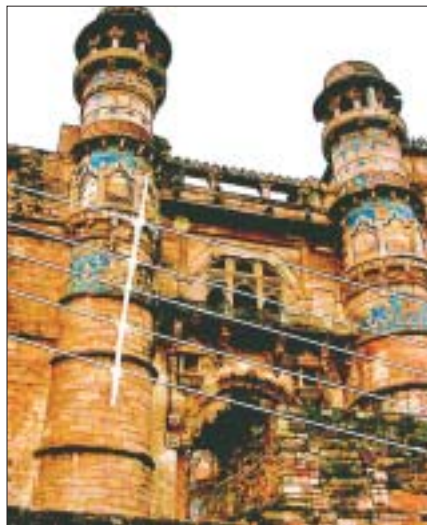


Madhya Pradesh, often called the “Heart of India”, is home to the cultural heritage of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam. Innumerable monuments, exquisitely carved temples, stupas, forts and palaces are dotted all over the state. Consisting largely of a plateau, the state is endowed with almost everything — from spectacular mountain ranges, meandering rivers and miles and miles of dense forests offering a unique and exciting panorama of wildlife in sylvan surroundings. Famous for the Khajuraho temples — ‘A World Heritage Site’ — exquisitely carved Jain temples and palaces, the state is a glorious reminder of the erstwhile era of rajahs and maharajas.

GWALIOR FORT

Described as “the pearl in the necklace of the castles of Hind” by the Mughal Emperor Babur, the Gwalior Fort was mightier than any other fort in medieval India. The majestic fort is a fine blend of the Hindu and Muslim architecture that characterizes structures in this region and finds its fullest expression in this brilliant monument.

The fort dominates the city’s skyline with its massive and captivating structure. Its dazzling beauty leaves an ever-



lasting imprint on the minds of those who visit it.

KHAJURAHO

Famous for its “stones of passion”, Khajuraho’s temples are a fine testimony of India’s glorious past. They are probably the most graphic, erotic and sensuous sculptures the world has ever known. There are literally hundreds of exquisite images on the interior and exterior walls of the shrines. These temples are all built on high platforms, several meters off the ground, either in granite or a combination of light sandstone and granite.

The famous western group of temples are designated as a World

Heritage Site and is enclosed within a beautifully laid out park.

KANHA NATIONAL PARK

The lush sal and bamboo forests, grassy meadows and ravines of Kanha inspired Rudyard Kipling to pen his famous novel ‘Jungle Book’. The park’s landmark achievement is the preservation of the rare Swamp Deer (Barasingha), saving it from near extinction.

OMKARESHWAR

Shaped like ‘Om’, the island is located at the confluence of the Narmada and the Kaveri rivers and is one of the holiest Hindu sites in India by virtue of the presence a jyotirlingam (lingam of light). The ground slopes gently along the northern edge but in the south and east there are cliffs over 150m high, forming a gorge.

CHITRAKOOT

Around 175km from Khajuraho, Chitrakoot is considered a sacred place by the Hindus, but is also widely known for its scenic beauty. It is said that Lord Rama and Sita — whose story is narrated in the epic ‘Ramayana’ — spent 11 out of the 14 years of their exile from the Kingdom of Ayodhya in the jungles of Chitrakoot.

■ President's Visit to Greece



President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam at the Athena Parthenon Temple during his visit to the Acropolis on April 27. President Kalam was in Athens on a four-day official visit. Earlier, on April 25, he addressed the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

EMBASSY OF INDIA

2107 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20008

Tel: 202-939-7000; Fax: 202-462-7276

E-mail: indembwash@indiagov.org

Web-site: www.indianembassy.org

CONSULATES

Consulate General of India
3 East, 64th Street,
New York
N.Y. 10021

Tel: 212-774-0600

Fax: 212-861-3788

E-mail:

indiacgny@aol.com

Web-site:

www.indianconsulateny.org

Consulate General of India
540 Arguello Boulevard
San Francisco
CA 94118

Tel: 415-668-0662

Fax: 415-668-2073

E-mail:

info@cgsif.org

Web-site:

www.cgsif.org

Consulate General of India
455 North Cityfront Plaza Drive
(NBC Tower Building)
Suite #850 Chicago, IL 60611

Tel: 312-595-0405 to 0410

Fax: 312-595-0416

E-mail:

cg@indianconsulate.com

Web-site:

chicago.indianconsulate.com

Consulate General of India
1990 Post Oak Blvd. # 600
3 Post Oak Central
Houston, TX 77056

Tel: 713-626-2148/49

Fax: 713-626-2450

E-mail:

cgi-hou@swbell.net

Web-site:

www.cgihouston.org

Printed and Published by the Press & Information Office, Embassy of India, 2107 Massachusetts Avenue, NW Washington, D.C., 20008

Telephone: 202-939-7065, Fax: 202-462-7276; E-mail: indembwash@indiagov.org Web-site: www.indianembassy.org

Content, design and production by IANS. www.ians.in

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2107 Massachusetts Avenue NW,
Washington, D.C. 20008

Tel: 202-939-7000;

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