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Ambassador Ronen Sen welcomed the gathering after an invocation by Solomon Isaac of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Embassy celebrates Christmas

■ India continues to rank second in the 2007 FDI Confidence Index, according to AT Kearney.

■ India's retail market is set to double in the next 3 years to \$30 billion, says a FICCI-Ernst & Young report.

■ India can achieve over 10 percent growth rate, says Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.

Pachauri and Gore receive Nobel Peace Prize

Former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore and Chairman of the UN climate panel Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, on December 10, received the Nobel Peace Prize, for their efforts to highlight man-made climate change.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee Chairman, Ole Danbolt Mjos, said Gore, 59, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had helped “lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract” this climate change. Mjos praised them for moving climate to the top of the world agenda. “We thank you for what you have done for Mother Earth,” Mjos said.

The award is worth \$1.53 million, and includes a gold medal and a certificate. In his speech at the ceremony in Oslo City Hall, Mjos said the committee’s choice “was not especially difficult”, citing how “climate-related issues are moving up the political agenda”.

Guests at the ceremony included Norway’s King Harald V, Queen Sonja, Crown Prince Haakon, Crown Princess Mette-Marit and cabinet members, who gave the two laureates a standing ovation.

Mjos said the approach adopted by the UN climate panel, created in 1988 with some 2,500 scientists and ongoing assessments of climate change, could be considered in other fields, in light of “biological diversity, desertification and overfishing of the seas”.

He cited Gore as “the single individual who has done most to prepare the ground for political action” to take on “climate change”.

Accepting the Prize, Al Gore called on humanity to mobilize at once against the dangers of a changing climate. “Without realizing it, we have begun to wage war on Earth itself,” Gore said in his acceptance speech. “Now, we and the Earth’s climate are locked in a relationship familiar to war



planners: ‘Mutually assured destruction.’ It is time to make peace with the planet.”

Gore said, “the Earth has a fever. And the fever is rising,” referring to the effects of global warming. These “cumulative actions” by mankind were comparable to waging “war on Earth”, he said.

“Too many of the world’s leaders are still best described in the words Winston Churchill applied to those who ignored Adolf Hitler’s threat: ‘They go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all powerful to be impotent,’” Gore said.

To meet the new “planetary emergency”, Gore said, “We must quickly mobilize our civilization with the urgency and resolve that has previously been seen only when nations mobilized for war.”

Gore urged world leaders to put a new climate treaty in place by 2010 — two years earlier than planned. Heads of State should meet every three months to negotiate the treaty because global warming must be slowed, he said. “The future is knocking at our door right now. Make no mistake, the next generation will ask us one of two questions,” said Gore. “Either they will ask: ‘What were you thinking; why didn’t you act? Or they will ask instead: ‘How did you find the moral courage to rise and successfully resolve

a crisis that so many said was impossible to solve?’”

Pachauri described the threat in measured, scientific terms and predicted a grim fate for the planet if the emission of greenhouse gases was not limited. A warming climate could lead to flooding of low-lying countries, disruptions of food supply, spread of diseases and loss of bio-diversity, he said.

“The neglect in protecting our heritage of natural resources could prove extremely

harmful for the human race and for all species that share common space on planet Earth,” Pachauri said in his speech. “It is within the reach of human society to meet these threats,” he added.

He described the award as a tribute to “the importance of the role of knowledge in shaping public policy”.

Pachauri listed the impact of climate change on many areas including health and access to clean water. He recalled the collapse of great civilizations like the Maya, Khmer and those of Mesopotamia due to serious drought, degradation, or depletion of natural resources.

Gore said that he would urge policymakers to “adopt a bold mandate for a treaty that establishes a universal global cap on emissions and uses the market in emissions trading”.

He also said that China and the U.S. as the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, “need to make the boldest moves, or stand accountable before history for their failure to act”.

At the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Bali, Russel Mittermeier, president of Conservation International, said, “Nobel Prizes go to visionaries. The simple fact is that Al Gore was warning us about the climate issue before most people even knew it existed,” recalling a 1989 meeting where Gore gave him a presentation on the matter.



Indo-U.S. Yudh Abhyas 07-02 Army Exercise

More than 120 U.S. Army soldiers from Fort Wainwright, Alaska, underwent training at the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains, with their Indian counterparts during Exercise Yudh Abhyas 07-02, building on existing skills and sharing tactics with their new friends.

The U.S. soldiers from C Company, Third Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division (also known as the Gimlets), were in India in November and spent one week at a military station before relocating and conducting a field training exercise.

An exchange was made during the opening ceremony, where C Company's 1st Platoon was cross attached to Second Battalion, Fifth Gorkha Rifles (Frontier Force) while the Indian Fourth Platoon, B Company, was paired with the Gimlets. During the time at the military station, classes were conducted by the Gorkhas to familiarize the U.S. troops with Indian troop maneuvers such as conducting searches, raids and other counter-insurgency activities in low-intensity insurgency environments. The Gimlets demonstrated for their hosts how the American Army handles deliberate attacks and other standard infantry operations in high-intensity insurgency environments.

The Field Training Exercise included various low-intensity, counter-insurgency actions, such as raids, civic assistance missions and quick reaction team operations. "We get to train here in the night, and in an environment that we don't get to in Alaska," said First Sgt. Richard Beaver, of the Gimlets. By exchanging platoons, both countries gain valu-



Gurdev Singh, an Indian Army master physical fitness instructor, gives a yoga demonstration to American soldiers from C Company, Third Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment.

able training experience and may discover new tactics that will benefit their soldiers in combat. "It lets our soldiers see that other countries are as proficient as we are," said Beaver. "They may just have a different way of doing things. Their job is to train and go to war, just like us." In addition to standard military training and exercises, the Gimlets were exposed to yoga by participating in morning sessions with the Gorkha soldiers — led by a special physical fitness cadre of master yoga instructors.

Other activities included playing sport such as soccer, basketball, volleyball and handball. Taking a break from training, both Indian and American soldiers celebrated Diwali on November 9. After a spectacular display of fireworks, the soldiers resumed tactical operations.

Ready for Action



The second batch of Indian Navy pilots Lieutenants N. Bharadwaj, A. Kawade and S. Dahiya ready to proceed to *USS George Washington* for their aircraft carrier landing qualification. All the three pilots successfully qualified on December 10, 2007.

Fourth ICT meeting held in New Delhi

The fourth meeting of the India-U.S. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Working Group was held at New Delhi on December 14. The ICT Working Group was co-chaired by M. Madhavan Nambiar, Additional Secretary, Department of IT, and Ambassador David Gross, U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy, Department of State.

The working group focussed on the approaches that the two governments could take to create an investment and regulatory environment that would maximize the development of the ICT

sector. The dialogue addressed outstanding issues, as well as opportunities for collaboration in the areas of universal service, liberalization of the ICT sector, the appropriate role for government in the adoption of new technologies, and facilitation for cooperation among centers of excellence in the two countries.

The U.S. and Indian business representatives expressed their desire to work in tandem with government agencies.

The issues of the Tantalization Agreement, a liberal visa regime for Indian IT professionals, and outsourcing were also discussed.

The U.S. delegation called on A. Raja, Minister for Communication and Information Technology, and Nikhil Kumar, Chairman, the Lok Sabha Standing Committee on IT, and discussed issues of mutual interest. The U.S. delegates also participated in "Telecom 2007" which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.

Recognizing the impact that the ICT sector has on the future of the India-U.S. bilateral relationship, as part of the U.S.-India Economic Dialogue, this initiative was launched in July 2005 during the Prime Minister's visit to Washington.

Economy News

Manmohan: Telecom connectivity has transformational role in rural India

Inaugurating the India Telecom-2007 in New Delhi on December 12, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh said that growth in the telecom sector was a critical component of India's infrastructure plans. Drawing attention toward the large rural-urban divide in connectivity, the Prime Minister said that telecom connectivity had the potential to play a transformational role in the country's rural areas. Dr. Singh expressed concern about capabilities in telecom R&D and manufacturing and stressed that the policy regime for making spectrum available should be fair, transparent, equitable and forward looking. Referring to spectrum availability, the Prime Minister said: "I have asked the Group of Ministers tasked with this to expeditiously conclude its deliberations and suggest a roadmap regarding availability and timing."

Following are the key points of the Prime Minister's address:

"The key to the growth of telecom has been liberalization, reforms and



Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh addresses the India Telecom-2007 Conference in New Delhi on December 12.

competition. This has been as true of telecom as it has been for civil aviation, insurance and asset management. All these sectors have benefited enormously from the removal of state monopolies, reduction in entry barriers to new firms, creation of a level-playing field between incumbents and new entrants, and most importantly, forward looking and even-handed regulation which has promoted competition and also effective consumer interests. All these are important steps whose lessons need to be kept in mind if we have to maintain the current growth

momentum into the distant future.

"There will be multiple benefits from increased rural telecom connectivity. At a narrow level, there will be a new burst of growth for the sector as a whole. There will be multiplier effects for the entire rural economy. As better telecom connectivity and consequently better IT connectivity — becomes a reality, our rural hinterland will become more integrated with the rapid growth processes now taking place in the rest of the economy. Second, while we can be satisfied with the growth in tele-density, I am concerned about our capabilities in telecom R&D and manufacturing.

"Lastly, I am concerned that we should have a policy regime which will enable the continued growth of the telecom sector for many many years to come. The key enabling factors for this sector have been liberalization, reforms and competition. We must never forget these principles."

For the complete text of the PM's speech click on <http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=33960>

US firm bids to set up hi-tech manufacturing hub

India's efforts to emerge as a hi-tech manufacturing hub has just received a much-needed leg-up. The Department of Information Technology (DIT) has received investment proposals worth over \$25 billion from 17 Indian and multinational companies, including Reliance Industries, Tata BP Solar and the U.S.-based Solar Semiconductor.

Investments worth over \$6 billion have already been committed while another \$20 billion are in the pipeline. These include India's first LCD panel unit by Videocon at an investment of \$1.8 billion, and two other proposals for solar cells and photovoltaic cells by Moser Baer and Titan Energy Systems of \$3.2 billion and \$1.2 billion, respec-



tively. The proposals come in the wake of the newly announced semiconductor policy, under which the Government plans to give financial sops to companies planning fab units. At least two-three units are eligible for incentives under the fab category and about 8-10 under the eco-system section.

"We have already received financial proposals from the three companies. These proposals would now be referred to an appraisal committee, which is expected to give the final approval to the proposals in the next

two-three months," a DIT official said.

The appraisal committee was set up to decide on the fiscal incentives to be granted to investors. Besides subject experts, the committee comprises officials from DIT, and the Ministries of Finance and Commerce.

Moser Baer already has a photo voltaic cell manufacturing plant. "We plan to set up two new units — one would be in Tamil Nadu and for the other, we are yet to decide the location," Moser Baer Executive Director Ratul Puri said. "The company expects the units to start production by 2009. The country's solar cell market is going to see a phenomenal increase from about 50 mega watt at present to 1 giga watt by 2010," he added. ■

BusinessWeek says \$2,540 Tata car is a 'trendsetter'



It is turning out to be a dream year for the Tata Group, the Indian conglomerate. *BusinessWeek* has termed its proposed \$2,540 car as one of the trendsetters of 2007, even as it named Ratan Tata among the world's 'Most Important People' for the year.

The much talked-about cheap car finds a place in the list of 'Most Important Trends for 2007' alongside the emergence of India and China as the world's new superpowers. In the *BusinessWeek* list of Most Important People of 2007, Tata finds a place alongside 23 other international names such as Apple Computer CEO Steve Jobs, U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, media mogul Rupert Murdoch, French President Nicholas Sarkozy and Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim.

Tata finds himself on the list for steering his group firms into the global league with billion-dollar acquisitions and innovative business plans. The twin recognition by *BusinessWeek* comes within a fortnight of Tata being named among the world's most powerful business people by another business magazine, *Fortune*.

Tata was the only Indian name in the *BusinessWeek* list of most important people as well as the *Fortune* list. Previously, a number of elite global rankings such as the richest billionaires and biggest revenue grossers have seen a significant Indian presence, sans Tata.

"The shy, unassuming Tata has emerged in 2007 as the dynamo of Indian business, taking his \$21-billion group global with bold acquisitions and ambitions. The year 2007 saw the biggest acquisition ever by an Indian company — the \$12-billion takeover by Tata Steel of Anglo-Dutch steelmaker Corus," *BusinessWeek* said.

India poised to become No. 3 market for Intel

India is expected to become one of Intel Corporation's top five markets within the next three years, fueled by growth in smaller cities. The country is already the fastest-growing market for the world's largest chipmaker.



"India is No. 8 right now for us. In another three years, it would climb to No. 3 or 4. The level of attention that India commands today at Intel in terms of resources and strategic focus is similar to what China had in the mid- to-late 1990s," said John McClure, Intel's marketing and operations director for South Asia.

The United States and China are the top two markets for Intel, followed by France, Britain, Germany, Japan and Brazil.

It is the smaller cities that Intel is betting on to drive growth, with plans to focus more on marketing in the hinterland. While 60 percent of the PC consumption happens in the top 70 cities, the growth is much faster in smaller cities, McClure said.

"While PC sales in the top 70 cities are growing at 10-15 percent, it is a 30-35 percent growth in the next 140 cities, albeit on a smaller base. Also, a large number of first-time PC buyers are opting for laptops in these cities, so the profile of buyers is similar to that of the top cities," he added.

Apart from smaller cities, Intel is also counting on growth in small businesses — employing up to 100 people. The small business segment makes up 30 percent of India's PC market, said McClure. "There is very rapid adoption of notebook PCs by small businesses. However, PC density among small businesses in India is still five times less than in China. There is a lot of untapped potential," he added.

India No. 2 in AT Kearney FDI confidence index



India continues to rank second in the 2007 Foreign Direct Investment Confidence Index, a survey of global executives conducted by management consulting firm AT Kearney.

China leads the index ranking for the fifth consecutive year and ranks first among Asian investors, 34 percent of whom plan to invest there over the next three years. India retains the second place in the index, a position it has held since displacing the United States in 2005.

Apart from India and China, 15 of the most attractive 25 FDI destinations are developing markets.

Brazil, the United Arab Emirates, and Russia all rank among the top 10. South Africa and Other Gulf States (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar) have made their debut in the 2007 Index, while Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia make a return to the Index's top 25 most attractive destinations.

Emerging markets have also registered the strongest investor optimism, with India, China, Brazil, the United Arab Emirates and Vietnam experiencing the most positive change in investment outlook during 2006, according to executives.

"Both developed and developing country investors will continue to cite India and China as their most preferred destination for first-time investments," said Vivek Gupta, managing director, AT Kearney India.

"India will continue to attract investors in the high value-added services industries, particularly financial services and information technology, which is strongly echoed by three-quarters of respondents from outside Asia who are 'highly likely' to invest in India over the next few years," Gupta added.

India's industrial growth up 11.8 percent in October

A robust performance by the manufacturing sector has pushed up industrial growth to 11.8 percent in October as against 4.5 percent in the same month last year.

While the manufacturing sector grew by 13.3 percent during the month, the performance of the mining and electricity sectors remained poor at 3.7 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively, according to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) released by the Government recently.

During April-October 2007, the IIP went up by 9.7 percent, but was marginally down from 10.1 percent recorded in the corresponding period in 2006.

During the seven-month period, the manufacturing sector recorded a growth of 10.4 percent, while the mining and electricity sectors grew by 4.8 percent and 7.2 percent, respectively.

Max New York to get \$600 mn capital



Max New York Life Insurance Company (MNYL) will receive a capital infusion of Rs. 24 billion (about \$600 million) in the next three to four years. Ted Mathas, president and chief operating officer,

along with Richard Mucci, chairman and CEO of New York Life Insurance Company (NYL), who were in India to attend a board meeting in December, said that they expected MNYL to break even by 2009.

"The promoters together have committed a capital of Rs. 24 billion, which will be infused over three to four years," said Mathas.

The current capital base of the insurance company is Rs. 8.07 billion.

At present, 60 percent of the new business premium for MNYL comes from Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIPS) while the remaining 40 percent is from traditional products. Mathas said that he expected the present demand for ULIPS to slow down over a period of three to four years. "Over an extended period, there may be a slowdown in ULIPS. Though 60 percent of our business is from ULIPS, a large portion is invested in the balanced portfolio and not in equities. Therefore, we will not be affected by the downward temporary phase whenever it happens," he said.

GM bets on hybrid, electric cars in India

U.S. auto major General Motors (GM) is betting big on hybrid and electric cars. The company is likely to launch these vehicles in India within the next five years. In 2007, the company is showcasing its hydrogen car GM Sequel at the Auto Expo in New Delhi, to study the market and understand audience response.



"It is likely that within the next five years we will look at getting electric cars and hybrid cars into India. We see that is the logical step to get these vehicles into the country, to reduce emissions and improve the environment," said Dr. Alan Taub, the company's executive director in charge of research and development.

Globally, the company is working on getting the cost-structure of its hybrid and electric vehicles, and is likely to have the technology, cost and other parameters in place by 2010.

US real estate firm to invest \$5 billion



The U.S.-based Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL), the world's leading integrated global real estate services and money management firm, is planning to strengthen its position in India. The firm, which recently merged with Trammel Crow Meghraj, a property consultant based in Mumbai, will bring its investment management business to India and has plans to invest around \$5 billion in the country's burgeoning property market.

"We don't have any presence in India's investment management service sector. Now, we have lined up plans to bring in the business to the country. We have also earmarked close to \$20 billion for the Asia-Pacific region, and India would get anywhere close to 25 percent of the amount," said Colin Dyer, Jones Lang LaSalle's president and chief executive officer.

He added that the fund would be deployed in high-growth sectors like real estate, hospitality and infrastructure. For the first time in its 220-year history, JLL recently hosted in India its global board of directors and global executive committee.

IBM expects India revenues to touch \$1 bn in '07

IT major IBM has said it expects revenue from its Indian operations to touch \$1 billion by the end of December 2007, growing at a rate of close to 40 percent.

"We expect our revenues to reach \$1 billion by the end of this calendar year, up from \$700 million in 2006. In the first three quarters of the current financial, the company's revenue has grown by over 39 percent," said Jesse Green, IBM's vice-president (financial management).

He said factors like competitive offerings, an effective sales force, a strong brand name and technology



base, along with the ability to offer hardware and software combinations would contribute to the figure.

The \$1 billion will include revenues from services and solutions provided by IBM to domestic clients and other

global corporates operating in India, along with total revenues of IBM-Daksh, its business process outsourcing unit.

In 2006, the company's India revenue grew by 37 percent compared to 2005, while the CAGR from 2002 to 2006 was over 49 percent.

"The company, which caters to around 17 industry sectors, experienced broad-base growth during the 2002-2006 period in telecom, financial services and small and medium businesses, growing at 58 percent, 34 percent and 35 percent, respectively," Green said in New York.

Wipro's US arm wins \$400 m Missouri deal



Infocrossing Healthcare Services, an indirect, wholly-owned subsidiary of Wipro, which provides

Medicaid and Medicare services to insurers, has bagged a multiple-year contract to provide services to Missouri's MO HealthNet program.

The contract, to be executed over a period of nine years, is expected to fetch the company \$407 million.

Wipro acquired the U.S.-based IT infrastructure and BPO services provider for approximately \$600 million in an all-cash deal in August 2007.

The contract also calls for Infocrossing to update Missouri's legacy-based Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS) and ensure that it is equipped to administer the new MO HealthNet program, which is responsible for purchasing and monitoring health care services for the state's low-income and vulnerable citizens.

The agreement provides for a one-year development period followed by up to nine years of operational support (six years plus three optional years).

Infocrossing Services will deliver Missouri's MO HealthNet program with services such as system development, system re-engineering and processing operations, through its existing offices in Missouri, Florida and New Jersey.

Amway India targets \$634 m turnover by '12

Amway India, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the U.S.-based \$6.3-billion Amway Corp., is eyeing a turnover of \$634 million in the country by 2012.



ics and skincare market in India was about Rs. 26.65 billion (about \$666.25 million), with an annual growth rate of 7 percent. This figure

"With the growth of color cosmetics market in India, we are very optimistic about expanding our business here, especially in the skincare and color cosmetic products segment," said William S. Pinckney, Amway India's managing director and chief executive officer, during the national launch of the company's color cosmetic products in Kolkata recently.

He said at present the color cosmet-

is likely to touch Rs. 30 billion by 2010. Of this, the total color cosmetic products market contributes Rs. 9.51 billion while skincare products contribute the rest.

"Currently, Amway has registered a compounded annual growth rate of 13 percent and grown by 62 percent over the past five years," Pinckney said.

He said Amway was also trying to tap the middle-class market to achieve its growth ambitions in India.

PSUs join hands to invest \$887 m in coal mines abroad



Five public sector companies — Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL), Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL), National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), Coal India Limited (CIL) and National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) — have joined hands to acquire coal mines abroad with an initial investment of \$887 million to help meet the demand of steel, power and other sectors. The Indian Government has approved the formation of a Special Purpose

Vehicle (SPV) with the five PSUs as constituents for acquiring coal mines abroad to ensure security of supply of coking coal and high-quality thermal coal. SAIL and CIL have put in Rs. 10 billion each as initial equity capital, while the other three PSUs have contributed Rs. 5 billion each, Minister of State for Coal Dasari Narayan Rao said.

The approved initial capital has been fixed at Rs. 100 billion while the initial equity capital is Rs. 35 billion. Meanwhile, CIL through its subsidiary Coal Videsh, has been looking at acquiring coal properties in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Canada and Australia.

India Inc.'s M&A bill crosses \$50 bn in '07

Mergers and acquisitions are set to become one of the most important trends of 2007 for India Inc., with the total deal value crossing the \$50-billion mark by end-November itself.

According to data compiled by international consultancy major Grant Thornton, India Inc. recorded M&A deals worth \$940 million in November, taking the total for first 11 months of 2007 to \$50.79 billion. A total of 58 M&A deals were announced in November against 51 deals amounting to \$610 million in the previous month, according to Grant Thornton. There was a distinct foreign flavor in the overall league table, which includes domestic as well as cross-border deals, the data showed.

Recently, Chennai-based S4Ind Software Private Limited acquired U.S.-based Carlisle Publishing Services for \$3.5 million. Post-merger, the Indian company sports a new name —



S4Carlisle Publishing Services and will engage in pre-press publishing work.

Sintex Industries has announced that Wausaukee Composites Inc., (WCI), its subsidiary based in Michigan, acquired its competitor, Nero Plastics Inc., also based in Michigan. Commenting on the acquisition, Amit Patel, managing director of Sintex, said: "This acquisition represents a significant step towards consolidating our position in the U.S. plastic composite market." Sintex is a leader in plastics and textiles, with operations in India and the U.S. The company acquired majority interest in

Wausaukee Composites in June 2007.

TVS Logistics Services and U.S.-based Global Rush formed a 49:51 joint venture — TVS America — to offer export and import logistics services, component assembly, warehousing, distribution and engineering support to Indian suppliers and U.S. manufacturers. TVS Logistics has been working with Global Rush, part of the \$1-billion enterprise owned by first-generation entrepreneur Andra Rush, as an alliance partner over the past two years.

GTL International, the wholly owned subsidiary of GTL, has acquired 100 percent stake in Strategic Communication Services (SCS), a network deployment company in North America, for an undisclosed amount. The acquisition would strengthen the services of network deployment, infrastructure management and project management services of GTL, said Manoj Tirodkar, chairman and managing director.

Internet user base grows to 46 million in India



For the first time ever, the internet user base in India grew by over 40 percent to touch 46 million in September 2007 from 32.2 million in the corresponding month last year.

During the month, the number of active internet users reached 32 million,

according to the Internet in India Report 2007, published jointly by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and IMRB International.

"Although a growth of 40 percent year-on-year makes us happy — given that for the last couple of years the rate of growth was 30-35 percent — the growth rate is not very satisfactory relative to what can be achieved and what needs to be achieved," IAMAI president Subho Ray said.

The report observes that the growth of internet users is primarily driven by the number of people who have the know-how and use a computer unaided. Some 70 percent computer literates have used the Internet some time or the other in their lives.

FLAG Telecom signs deal with US IT firm



FLAG Telecom Group, a subsidiary of the Anil Ambani-owned Reliance Communications, has inked a deal with U.S.-based GlassHouse Technologies to offer digital storage space management services. The firm said that GlassHouse, an independent IT infrastructure consulting and services firm providing managed IT services directly to enterprise customers, would be expanding its Infrastructure Operation Centre (IOC) to include the FLAG campus in India. "IOC will be continually staffed by FLAG employees in a managed service outsourcing relationship and provide significant operating cost reduction," said Jarret Appleby, FLAG Telecom's chief strategy and marketing officer.

"What we are looking at is really part of the transformation of FLAG Telecom for the next-generation network for global reach with GlassHouse to support global service delivery," Appleby said.

"Now we have layered our global delivery platform in the specialized management IT services. It is a different approach from Wipro or Infosys. We are leveraging our infrastructure and have initially specialized with GlassHouse in the global storage market, a \$30-billion market."

India can achieve 10 percent growth: PM

Right policies, high savings and investment rates can step up India's growth to over 10 percent, though some global developments may impact capital flows, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh said in New Delhi on December 19 at the 54th meeting of the National Development Council (NDC), which met to approve the Rs. 36.44 trillion 11th Five Year Plan.

"It is possible that with the correct set of policies and dedicated effort by both the Central and State Governments, we will not only maintain this momentum of high growth but may be able to raise it to 10 percent," Singh said.

"The high growth rate has become possible because of historically high



savings and investment rates," he said.

"Our savings rate after stagnating for almost two decades has touched 34 percent of GDP and the investment rate has crossed 35 percent," the Prime Minister said. "These are likely to go up in future because of our young population profile," he added at the meeting which was attended by Chief Ministers of States, Lieutenant

Governors, key Union Ministers and Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

The Prime Minister also dwelt on the current turmoil in the global economy but added that while these could have an impact on India's economy, it cannot derail it because of its inherent resilience. "Our economy has demonstrated resilience in meeting the challenges posed by globalization. In the last two decades, our industry — both large and small — has restructured and become globally competitive."

The National Development Council on December 19 gave its unanimous endorsement to the Eleventh Plan (2007-12) setting an accelerated economic growth of nine percent per annum for the five-year period.

Ad industry set to grow 61%: Report

After witnessing an average growth rate of only 12-13 percent over the last three years, the Indian advertising industry is set to grow 61 percent by 2010 with advertising spending climbing to Rs. 36 million from Rs. 22 million, in 2007.



For every Rs. 100 spent by advertisers, Rs. 91 is spent on television and print media, while outdoor media accounts for Rs. 5. The rest is divided among cinema, radio and the internet, says the report.

"We expect advertising expenditure in India to increase from 0.5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) to 0.53 percent over the next three years," said Jonathan Barnard, head of publications, ZenithOptimedia.

According to industry experts, 2008 will mark the beginning of this upswing.

"The Indian advertising expenditure is doubling every four years, primarily dominated by spends on television and print campaigns," according to the advertising outlook report released by London-based ZenithOptimedia, the media planning and buying arm of advertising group Publicis.

Wipro wins best software testing tool award

It major Wipro Technologies has won the best practice award for software testing, set up by the U.S.-based International Institute for Software Testing (IIST), the company announced in Bangalore on December 14. The company's testing services division was given the award for innovating a statistical tool that reduces the time taken to test a product. "As part of our proprietary tools suite code-named STORM (statistics, operations, research, matrix), the tool helps us to reduce test case development effort by about

30 percent," Wipro vice-president and testing services head C.P. Gangadharaiah said. With over 10 years of experience in independent testing services, Wipro is the largest third-party offshore testing service provider worldwide. It has also set-up the first wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) pre-certification and certification lab at its Bangalore campus.

The IT bellwether offers software testing services to global customers in partnership with other leading vendors such as Hewlett-Packard, IBM and Microsoft.

India among top 5 sharing half of global GDP

Five countries — the United States, China, Japan, Germany and India — account for nearly half of the world's GDP, as measured by buying power in dollars, according to a new World Bank report.

The new data released on December 17 shows that the world economy produced goods and services worth almost \$55 trillion in 2005 and almost 40 percent of the world's output came from developing economies. In the new tabulations of GDP, the U.S. remains the largest economy in the world with a world share of 23 percent, followed by China with 10 percent and Japan with 7 percent. Germany comes next with 5 percent followed by India in the fifth place with 4 percent.

The five countries thus account for 49 percent in the new preliminary International Comparison Programme report on purchasing power parity (PPP). "The real outputs of their economies have not changed, only the way we measure them has," it says.

When measured using PPPs, world GDP is larger than GDP converted to dollars using market exchange rates. "This effect is particularly noticeable for low and lower-middle-income economies. For example, India's share of global GDP in 2005 is slightly greater than 4 percent when measured using PPP-based GDP, but only 2 percent when measured using market exchange rates," says the report.

Easton Bell Sports may source apparel from India

The U.S.-based \$600-million sport equipment and accessories manufacturer, Easton Bell Sports Inc., is looking at Asia for sourcing in a big way.

Pressed to improve margins by cutting costs, a team of officials from the company headquarters at Van Nuys, California, recently visited China and India, exploring possibilities for sourcing sports apparels.

"We want to take Easton Bell to the next level by building competitive operations. We would like to reduce our costs by 10 percent which in turn is expected to improve our bottom line by \$30 million," said Anthony D'Onofrio, chief operating officer.

According to him, the company would shift its production to Asia if



costs worked out favorably. Easton Bell manufactures and markets sports products under four brands: Easton (baseball, softball, ice hockey equipment, apparel and cycling component), Bell (cycling and action sports helmets and accessories), Giro (cycling and snow sports helmets) and Riddell (football and baseball equipment and reconditioning services).

According to D'Onofrio, the company sources products like bats, helmets and other products from the Philippines, China, Taiwan and Mexico. A relatively small player in the sports apparel segment, Easton Bell

has decided to focus on this segment as it sees immense growth opportunities.

"The fashion of wearing sports apparel is one of the great demand drivers," remarked D'Onofrio.

He said the size of sportswear market in North America is around \$3 billion. The sports apparel segment, dominated by Nike and Adidas, offers good potential as the garments are not only worn by serious sportsmen but also by others. While Bell brand apparels are targeted at the mass market, Easton and Riddell brands are focussed on institutional and speciality segments.

"We have gained leadership position in other product segments and we are confident of replicating the same in the apparel segment as well," D'Onofrio added.

Tatas world's third most accountable group



India's Tata Group has been named the world's third most accountable and transparent company by Britain's One World Trust. According to Rob Lloyd, the report's lead author, the assessment is a measure of the extent to

which organizations have the policies and systems in place to enhance consistent and coherent accountability to the people they affect. The report ranked GE No. 1 and GlaxoSmithKline No. 2 among the most transparent and accountable companies.

The annual Global Accountability Report ranked the Tata Group at No. 10, among the world's 30 most powerful organizations from the inter-governmental, non-governmental and corporate sector, to be accountable to civil society, affected communities and wider public.

Retail market to double in three years to \$30 billion: Report



The organized retail market is set to double in the next three years to \$30 billion, says a FICCI-Ernst & Young report on the retail sector.

Also, according to the report, the organized sector, which today accounts for a meagre 5 percent of the total retail market may increase its share to 30 percent in the next 10 years.

"Without a strong supply chain, it would be impossible to have a successful retail venture. The key to efficiency in today's supply chain is the adoption of standards that can be benchmarked with global best practices," said Bharti Enterprises managing director Rajan Mittal, while releasing the report 'Winning with intelligent supply chains'. The report highlights the challenges facing retail in India.

10



Kolkata's Oberoi Grand hits global list

Kolkata's Oberoi Grand has been voted one of the top 25 conference hotels in Asia

by readers of the travel magazine *Smart-Travel Asia*, backed by smarttravelasia.com.

The Grand was the only Indian hotel on the list, which was topped by the Grand Hyatt of Hongkong. Not surprisingly, among

Asian cities, Bangkok had the highest number of top-rated hotels with as many as eight, followed by Hongkong with six and Singapore four. Amitabh Rai, the general manager of the Oberoi Grand, attributed the hotel's success to its staff.

"Every month, at the staff meeting, the staff shout out 'no' very loudly 15-20 times, because the message is that no staff member should ever say no again in the month to any

guest seeking a service or some help," he quipped. The hotel has 200-odd employees serving 216 rooms and three major banquet halls and some small meeting rooms.

"We are rebuilding the Chowringhee Road wing into very large, super-luxury rooms and suites with a view of the Kolkata Maidan and the River Ganga beyond," said Rai.

The Grand achieved average room revenue of over Rs. 15,000 last year.

Boeing signs \$1-billion pact with India's HAL

U.S. aerospace major Boeing has upped the ante for aircraft sales to the Indian armed forces by inking a \$1-billion pact with the state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) to bring new manufacturing work in India over the next decade.

Under the pact, Boeing and HAL will explore opportunities to shift work packages to India with an initial value of \$10 to \$20 million per annum and increase this as business prospects develop, top officials of the two companies separately said.

The agreement, signed in New Delhi on December 20 by Boeing Integrated Defense Systems (IDS) CEO Jim Albaugh and HAL chairman Ashok K.



Baweja, provides for sharing key Boeing business and manufacturing tools with HAL.

"The agreement represents an important step in our efforts to build solid long-term partnerships in India to make Boeing products more globally competitive, while allowing HAL to grow and expand its potential market around the world," Albaugh told

reporters in New Delhi. "This is a significant step by two aerospace leaders that opens up new avenues and areas of co-operation," Baweja said in a statement.

The pact covers the manufacture of sub-systems by HAL for a wide range of Boeing products like the F/A-18 Super Hornet combat jet, the CH-47F heavy-lift Chinook helicopter, and the P-8A multi-mission maritime aircraft the company hopes to sell to the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy.

"Boeing will also support HAL in developing manufacturing processes and capabilities needed for the production of hardware for Boeing and/or its subcontractors," the statement said.

11

Indian firms join DuPont for workplace safety

A number of companies from India, including Reliance Industries and Hindustan Unilever, have joined the U.S. multinational chemical and healthcare company DuPont's global initiative to improve workplace safety.

DuPont's initiative, called the World Safety Declaration, was launched in 2005 to provide companies with a framework to find common ground in improving workplace safety globally. About 46 companies around the globe, including some in India, across a wide range of industries had signed up for the initiative as of May 2007.

Orchid Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals, Tata Steel, Tata Chemicals, Hindustan Unilever and Reliance Industries are among the seven companies who have joined the campaign. These companies have already signed up with DuPont, which is known globally as a pioneer in workplace safety, to develop and implement safety models at their workplaces.

In 2005, the International Labor Office (ILO) estimated that over two million lives are claimed annually by



job-related accidents and illnesses and the number appears to be rising. Some 268 million non-fatal workplace accidents occur each year, causing people to miss at least three days of work, while 160 million new cases of work-related illness arise.

"The initiative is a voluntary sharing of information for creating action networks for safety in workplaces," S. Mani, senior vice-president and head of corporate safety, health and environment, Orchid Chemicals, said.

"DuPont has found that 96 percent of industrial accidents happened due to unsafe behavior. These accidents create damage to products, people and factories. One of the objectives of the DuPont campaign is to bring about a change in culture towards improving safety perception," he added.

Signatories to the World Safety Declaration have to make a public commitment to improve workplace safety and collaborate with other companies to enhance safety at the workplace and home in ways that can be defined, evaluated and measured.

Reliance Communications acquires US firm Yipes

Reliance Communications on December 20 said it had acquired the U.S.-based data communications services company Yipes for \$300 million to amplify its presence in the \$100-billion global market for this industry. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the regulator for the industry in the U.S., has also given its nod to the acquisition by Flag Telecom, a part of the Reliance-Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group, the company said in a statement.

"FCC approval is an important step for Reliance Communications to accelerate its plans to expand Yipes' coverage in the U.S. domestic market," said Punit Garg, chief executive of Flag and president of Reliance Communications. "This step also paves the way to extend Yipes' services worldwide over Flag's global next-generation network, creating significantly more value from our undersea network in the strongholds of India, the Middle East and East Asia."

According to Flag, the global enterprise and institutional data services market is estimated at \$100 billion, while the Ethernet services market is projected to become a \$30.7-billion market by 2012.

Reliance Communications also plans to invest in the global expansion of Yipes' services and take its network coverage beyond the 14 key metropolitan markets in the U.S. to offer combined solutions with the expertise of both companies.

Vikram Pandit appointed Citigroup CEO

Citigroup, the world's largest financial services company, has appointed India-born Vikram Pandit as the company's new chief executive officer (CEO) and member of its board of directors.

The appointment of the 50-year-old Pandit, who moved to New York from India at the age of 16 to attend Columbia University, was announced in New York on December 11. He is currently chairman and CEO of the Institutional Clients Group, which comprises Citi Markets and Banking, and Citi Alternative Investments.

The bank also named Winfried F.W. Bischoff, the acting chief executive, as chairman, succeeding Robert E. Rubin, the former U.S. treasury secretary who stepped into the role when Charles O. Prince III resigned on November 4.

At that time, the bank was facing up to \$11 billion in new losses tied to its exposure to mortgage-related invest-




ments after racking up about \$6.4 billion in third-quarter write-downs, including about \$1.6 billion stemming from subprime mortgages. Rubin will return to his previous role as a member of the Citigroup board of directors and chairman of the executive committee of the board.

Pandit is reported to have edged out another Indian, Ajay Banga, who runs Citigroup's international consumer group, for the plum job. Others in the running included former Citigroup president Robert Willumstad and Michael Neal, who runs General Electric Company's (GE) commercial-finance business.

A former president and CEO of

Morgan Stanley's Institutional Securities Group, Pandit joined the Citigroup only six months ago after it bought Old Lane Partners, a hedge fund and private equity fund manager founded by him, for an estimated \$800 million.

"Citi is an extraordinary institution with tremendous talent, resources and capabilities, geographic and business scope. Our challenge is to capitalize on these strengths to deliver the high-quality service and products our clients require and to generate the superior returns our shareholders expect," Pandit said after his appointment.

"Simplifying the company's organizational structure and aligning our businesses and resources with appropriate goals and economic realities will be among our initial priorities," he said, vowing to work closely with the board "to assure that our strategy, structure, scale and diversification position the company for growth." 

Gopio chief to get PIO award on Jan 4



Thomas Abraham, chairman of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (Gopio), will be given the third Bharatvanshi Gaurav Award for his service

to the NRI community. Former Indian vice-president Bhairon Singh Shekhawat will present the award, carrying a cash prize of Rs.10 million, on January 4 in New Delhi.

The award was instituted by the Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Nyas to honor a person of Indian origin (PIO) or NRI, each year, for outstanding contributions toward fostering a better understanding abroad of India, or for furthering India's causes, concerns and interests, internationally, or for serving the Indian diaspora.

Abraham has been working with the Indian American community for 33 years. He served as the first president (1976-81) of the Federation of Indian Associations of New York, which organizes the largest Republic Day parade outside India. He founded the National Federation of Indian American Associations in 1980 and Gopio in 1989.

Indian American tops science contest

An Indian-American girl, Isha Himani Jain, is the new national champion in one of the most coveted student science competitions in the U.S.


The 16-year-old student of Freedom High School in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, won in the individual category of the Siemens Competition in Mathematics, Science and Technology. She has been awarded a \$100,000 scholarship for having identified a cellular mechanism underlying the spurts in bone growth in zebra fish, similar to the way children's bones grow.

Isha, whose work has been published in the journal *Developmental Dynamics*, said she chose to study zebra fish because the species is a good animal model. She said her research should lead to understanding bone growth in other vertebrates



along with bone disorders in humans. Talking about future academic plans, she said that she was applying to Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Yale. "I want to specialize in genetics, and want to eventually have my own lab."

Isha says her father, Himanshu Jain, a Chair Professor at the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, and her mother Sweetie Jain, who practices family medicine, encouraged her.

Janelle Schlossberger and Amanda Marinoff, students at a school in Long Island, New York, were declared winners in the competition's team category for creating a molecule that helps block the reproduction of drug-resistant tuberculosis bacteria. They shared a \$100,000 scholarship. 

Lehman Brothers Asia-Pacific head latest to join USIBC board



T. S. Chopra Indra Nooyi Sanjay Nayar

Jesse Bhattal, CEO of Lehman Brothers Asia-Pacific, a leading investment bank has joined the board of a leading advocacy group seeking stronger Indo-U.S. commercial ties.

In recent times, Bhattal is the sixth high-profile business executive to join the board of U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC), which represents 250 of the largest American companies investing in India and over two dozen of the largest Indian global companies.

His appointment follows that of PepsiCo chairman and CEO Indra K.

Nooyi, Boeing India president Ian Thomas, Citi India CEO Sanjay Nayar, Merrill Lynch International chairman James Quigley and GE India president and CEO Tejpreet Singh Chopra.

The board members support the USIBC's chairman with their experience of investments in India.

The USIBC is the premier business advocacy organization representing America's top companies investing in India, joined by global Indian companies. It plays a critical role in supporting the U.S. Government's India initiatives that include the U.S.-India Economic Dialogue, the U.S.-India High Technology Cooperation Group, U.S.-India Energy Dialogue, the Defense Procurement and Production Group, and the U.S.-India Trade Policy Forum.

Three Indian-origin students among 32 Rhodes scholars

Three Indian-origin students are among five South Asians in the U.S., who have won the prestigious Rhodes scholarship, which provides for two to three years of study at Oxford University in England.

They are among the 32 American Rhodes scholars announced by the scholarship trust. Apart from the three Indian-origin students, one is of Pakistani origin while another is of Indo-Caribbean lineage from Trinidad.

Shayak Sarkar graduated from Harvard with a master's in statistics and is interested in applying his analytical skills in mathematics, statistics and economics to the problems of poverty, especially affordable housing and education reform. Pravin S. Rajan graduated from Georgetown University with majors in science, technology and international relations.

Deep J. Shah is a senior at the University of Georgia, where he is majoring in international affairs and biology. He has publications both in public policy and biochemistry and has served as an intern in the U.S. Senate and New York City hospitals.

Pitroda gets industry leader award



Sam Pitroda, chairman of India's Knowledge Commission, has been given a prestigious industry leader award for public welfare service by the Institute of

Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc., (IEEE), a professional association for the advancement of technology. The award, "for exceptional contribution in developing indigenous system and telecommunications infrastructure in India", was presented to the noted technocrat by Nim Cheung, president of the IEEE Communications Society, at an event in Washington on November 27. Credited with having laid the foundation for and ushered in India's technology and telecommunications revolution in the 1980s, Pitroda accepted the "award on behalf of the thousands of Indian engineers and scientists who have worked hard for the benefit of all the professionals".

Pitroda headed six technology missions related to telecommunications, water, literacy, immunization, dairy and oil seeds during his tenure as advisor to former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in the 1980s.

Indian among CNN global heroes finalists

An Indian quadriplegic, who runs one of India's largest rehabilitation centers for the disabled in Tamil Nadu, is one of the 18 finalists in the list of CNN Heroes worldwide.

S. Ramakrishna was shortlisted in the Medical Marvels category, one of the six categories of people doing extraordinary service for humanity and Earth. Ramakrishna, 53, runs Amar Seva Sangam from Ayikydy in Tirunelveli district, which serves thousands of people in about 300 villages.

His rehabilitation program occupies a 20-building campus with a mission to help disabled people live more meaningful lives. The program empowers the disabled through vocational training, operates a school for the disabled and a specialized school for children with cerebral palsy and mental retardation.

However, the honor in the Medical Marvels category went to Peter Kithene, who has founded a clinic in his native country Kenya, to provide medical services to over 18,000 patients.

Sikh leader is trustee of parliament of religions

A U.S.-based Sikh leader has been nominated trustee of the Council for Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR). Dr. Tarunjit Singh, chair of the Interfaith Committee of the World Sikh Council — America Region (WSC-AR), was nominated to the council that aims to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities.

"Now more than ever, the world needs the wisdom and energy of people of faith, spirit, and goodwill to be working for peace, justice, and sustainability. We look forward to a

partnership with you in making this indispensable contribution possible," said Rev. Dirk Ficca, executive director of CPWR.

Singh, research scientist at the Ohio State University, remarked: "I look forward to working with fellow trustees to promote interfaith respect and understanding in a world that is being increasingly polarized along ethnic, religious, nationalistic, and class boundaries."

CPWR was set up to organize the centennial celebration of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

Interceptor Missile Test Fired

India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on December 6, 2007, successfully demonstrated its capability to defend the nation against ballistic missile attacks by testing an indigenously designed and developed hypersonic interceptor missile. The missile destroyed an incoming target missile in a direct hit over the Bay of Bengal. The interception took place at an altitude of 15 km, in the "endo-atmosphere".

Aimed at developing a full-fledged multi-layer Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) system, the test-fire exercise was carried out from two different launch sites of the integrated test range (ITR) in the Bay of Bengal. The target missile, a modified, single-stage 'Prithvi' missile called 'TGT-04,' was launched by the Indian Army in an independent manner from Chandipur-on-Sea, Orissa, at 11 am. Five minutes later, the interceptor missile, named 'AAD-02' (Advanced Air Defense), roared off from a mobile launcher at Wheeler Island, about 70 km across the sea from Chandipur.

The target missile climbed to an altitude of 110 km and had a free fall at a speed of 2.5 to 3 mach. The AAD-02, speeding at 4.5 mach, homed in on the target in a head-on collision. The interception took place 25 seconds after



AGNI Missile: The newest version in the AGNI series of missiles, AGNI-IV is likely to be readied by 2010. The development is on schedule and it is expected to be flight tested within 9-12 months.

AAD-02 took off. The radars at Konark and Paradip, in Orissa, picked up the target missile (TGT-04) in its ascent mode and communicated its velocity and position to the MCC (Mission Control Center). The MCC classified it as a ballistic missile and assigned the task of waylaying it to AAD-02. The interceptor lifted off, homed in on the target, using a radio frequency seeker on board, and

achieved a "direct hit". M. Natarajan, Scientific Advisor to the Defense Minister and Secretary, Department of Defense Research and Development, called the mission a "great success" and likened the interception to "almost hitting a bullet with a bullet". The launch propelled the nation into the elite club, comprising the United States, Russia and Israel. Dr. V.K. Saraswat, Distinguished Scientist and Chief Controller R&D for Missile and Strategic Systems (M&SS) and Program Director told that "the successful interception certainly confirms the capability of India to defend itself against incoming ballistic missiles. We can assure the nation today that the DRDO has the technology to develop a potent missile shield for the country."

The AAD system is two layered involving "exo-atmospheric" interceptor missiles and "endo-atmospheric" ones. It intercepts an incoming enemy missile at an altitude of approximately 80 km and then again at about 15 km to ensure that the incoming missile is completely destroyed. In the next launch in April 2008, DRDO would launch two interceptor missiles to intercept a single incoming target missile in both exo-atmosphere (above 40 km altitude) and endo-atmosphere (below 30 km altitude).

Akash missile tested



Akash, a surface-to-air multi-target missile, was successfully test fired in a series of firings, carried out at the Interim Test Range at Balasore, Orissa, in December. The missile, which has the strike range of 25 km, targeted the tow body of a Pilotless Target Aircraft (PTA) 'Lakshya' in a salvo of two missiles on a single target. The tests paved the way for its induction into the Indian Air

Force. Akash operates in conjunction with the indigenously built Rajendra radar developed by the ERDE (Electronics and Radar Development Establishment) and is capable of tracking 64 targets and guide up to 12 missiles simultaneously.

Tejas flies with Litening



The Tejas LCA program received a major fillip with the first successful flight test using the 'Litening' pod which can provide the pilot with day and night pictures of terrain using "Laser Ranging and Laser Spot Seeking" (LDP) system. In a flawless flight on December 10, the Prototype Vehicle-2 took off with the LDP

and completed a landmark flight in which all test objectives were achieved. The carriage of the LDP confers a significant precision strike capability to Tejas in conjunction with laser-guided bombs, or what are commonly referred to as "smart bombs".

'Foreign cooperation will boost thorium research'

India's research on using thorium as nuclear fuel is making progress and will get a boost if there was foreign cooperation, Prithviraj Chavan, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), told Parliament on December 5.

Replying to a question on nuclear power generation with international cooperation, he said, India had planned an expansion of indigenous nuclear power, including the erection of eight indigenous 700 MW capacity pressurized heavy water reactors.

"This will be entirely done with indigenous sources of uranium. This has been planned now. In addition, we are planning some light water reactors based on imported reactors, which will be subject to international cooperation."

The Minister added that the Government was also planning new advanced heavy water reactors of 300



Prithviraj Chavan,
MoS, PMO

MW capacity, which will be taken up soon. India is building a 500 MW fast breeder reactor at Kalpakkam.

Regarding the research on using thorium for nuclear power generation, he said: "The research on thorium is completely on track. We are going ahead with it. If international cooperation happens, it will go on a

much faster pace."

However, he added a note of caution: "The research on the thorium technology is a long three-phased program. Unless and until we complete the second phase — the fast breeder reactor program — we cannot really start generating power from thorium."

Pointing out that the world was turning to nuclear power generation due to global warming concerns, Chavan said the National Thermal Power Corporation would also enter the sector if it were opened up.

Current laws permit only Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited, under the Department of Atomic Energy, to produce nuclear power.

He said a second campus of the Bhabha Atomic Research Center (BARC), Trombay, was being set up near Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, to carry out advanced research and development in nuclear science.

IBM brings world's fastest chip to India



IT major IBM has launched the world's fastest microprocessor, the dual-core POWER6, in India. Along with the launch, the System p570 server and

the BladeCenter JS22, powered by this new chip, will also be available in the country, said Shashi B. Mal, Director, Systems and Technology Group, IBM India/South Asia.

The POWER6 features industry leading virtualization capabilities, and is also the latest addition to IBM's Project Big Green initiative allowing "unparalleled power savings on mid-range servers through dynamic re-allocation of resources, power and cooling benefits", Mal said. IBM has also bagged the No. 1 position in the overall server market in India during the third quarter of the 2007, in terms of revenue, he added. The company re-established itself in the X86 and non-Q86 markets with a 30 percent share in the third quarter, he said. Commenting on the launch of the new offerings, Jyoti Satyanathan, Vice-President, IBM India/South Asia said: "The System p570 server and our blade servers, powered by POWER6 processor, are industry leading, benchmarked solutions that provide the best return on IT investments to organizations of all sizes."

Bangalore is India's nano-technology hub

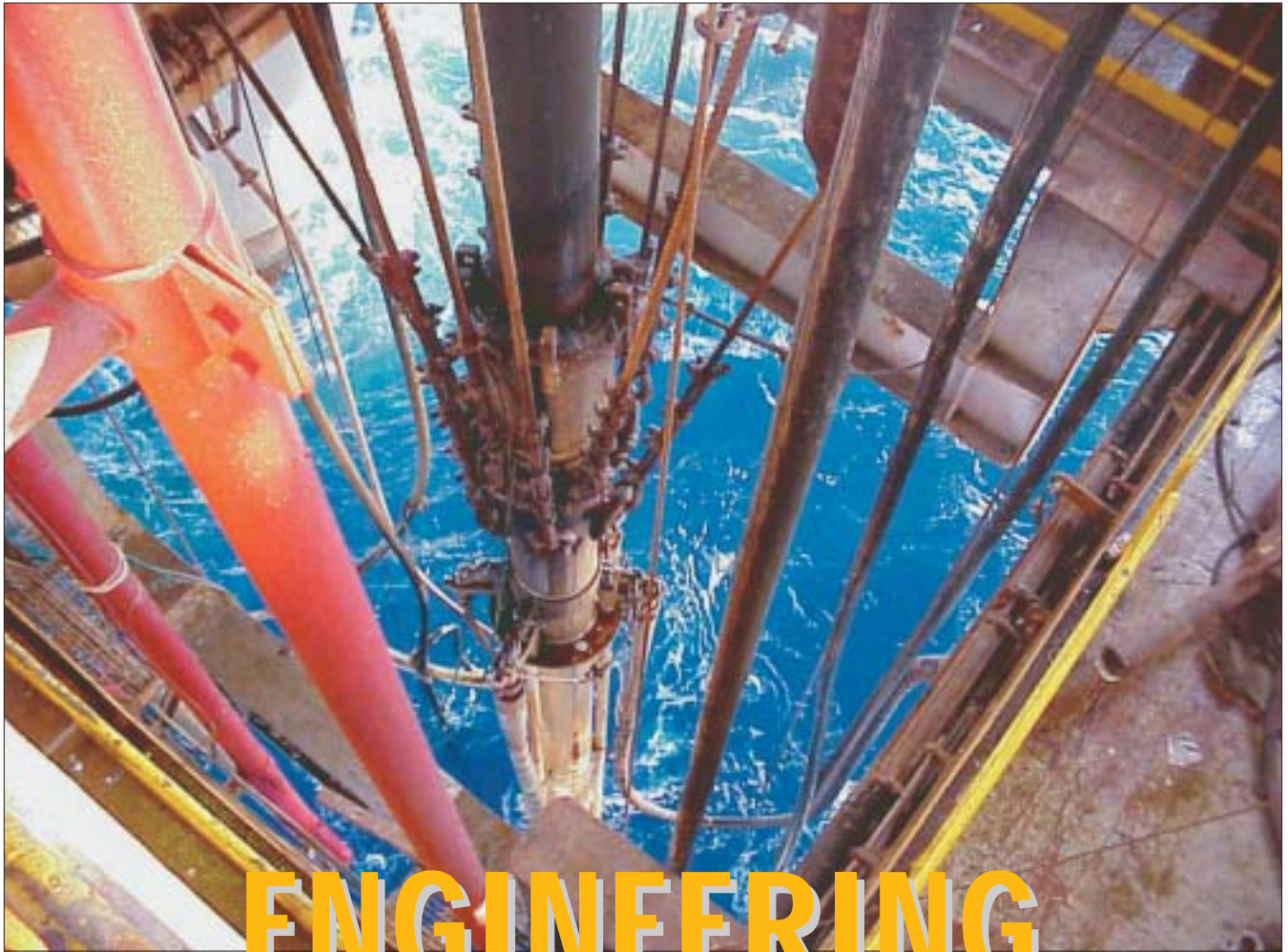


Having triggered the growth of IT and biotechnology, Bangalore, the Silicon City of India, is set to spearhead the development of nanoscience and nanotechnology in the country.

Inaugurating "Bangalore Nano 2007" in Bangalore on December 6, Karnataka Governor Rameshwar Thakur said the State Government was collaborating with Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) to foster nanoscience and nanotechnology, leveraging the rich talent pool and science and technology resources in the State.

"The State Government has taken a lead in exploring priority areas of nanoscientific research and technology. A modest beginning was made last year and in the current fiscal (2007-08), budgetary support has been made to promote nanotechnology," Thakur told about 500 delegates participating in the two-day event.

The Bangalore "nano" convention was seen as an ideal forum for researchers and industrialists to interact and explore possibilities of applications of nanotechnology in electronics, bio-pharmaceuticals and engineering.



ENGINEERING

India's growth

When India threw open its gates, in the early 1990s, as part of the LPG (liberalization, privatization and globalization) policies, none could have imagined that the heavy engineering industry and the engineering construction sectors would record explosive growth over the following years.

The heavy engineering industry comprises machine tools, heavy electricals, industrial machinery and the auto industry, which provide goods and services for almost all sectors of the economy, including power, rail and road transport.

Sixteen years after the reforms were initiated, the sector has emerged at the vanguard of India's growth story.

The machine building industry caters to basic industries such as steel, non-ferrous metals, fertilizer, refineries, petrochemicals, shipping and cement. It is part and parcel of the infrastructure sector.

According to the Planning Commission, India will require \$350 billion worth of infrastructure investment over the next five years. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, says the investment requirement could be met through foreign direct investment (FDI) and private sector participation.

With many airports, seaports, roads, bridges and power projects in the pipeline, the prospects for the heavy engineering industry and the EPC (engineering, procurement, construc-

tion) sector in the domestic market have brightened. Among domestic majors, Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has established itself as an Indian multinational with a slew of projects undertaken by its engineering and construction divisions, both in India and abroad. Some major works include a gas and crude distillation unit at Zirku Island in Abu Dhabi, an FCC (fluid catalytic cracking) regenerator and combustor, which also is the world's largest regenerator, for the Reliance refinery in India; the landmark Salalah power project in Oman and the Mumbai-Pune expressway, India's first six-lane concrete expressway built to international standards.

With developing technological expertise, strategic alliances and world-

class standards, the global EPC sector is increasingly adopting quicker and efficient methods. International alliances, collaborations and an ongoing consolidation process and outsourcing are providing much-needed adrenalin to the sector.

Toyo Engineering, Jacobs H&G, Uhde, Tecnimont and Aker Kvaerner Powergas are among the leading multinational players in India. "There is a boom in the market, with many heavy engineering contracts coming up in India," says a spokesman of Tecnimont. "Virtually all the players have a handful of projects, and are

identifying critical activities in time, and proper construction supervision are the necessary tools to achieve these goals. Indian EPC majors are now looking across the borders. Major projects are likely in the Middle East, China, Africa, Vietnam, Latin America and, of course, the Asia-Pacific Rim countries. The Middle East is the current hotspot, where cheaper energy, feedstock and finance will propel a quantum leap in project activities.

India has a definite edge over other countries due to lower costs, faster execution and availability of resources. The availability of a vast pool of

international construction contractors. This trend is expected to increase substantially in the future, despite the competition that could be expected through deployments from China, the Philippines and East European countries. The rapid rise of the heavy engineering industry has fueled industrial sector growth, which recorded an expansion of 10.3 percent (measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production, or IIP) during April-October of the last financial year (2006-07) as compared to 8.6 percent achieved during the corresponding period in the previous fiscal.



The rapid rise of the heavy engineering industry has fuelled industrial sector growth, which recorded an expansion of 10.3 percent during April-October of financial year (2006-07) as compared to 8.6 percent achieved during the corresponding period in the previous fiscal.

facing a resource crunch, unlike in the past." A spokesperson of Aker Kvaerner Powergas India says: "These days, the total time span for executing projects has reduced drastically. Every customer wants high quality, world-class construction, built in the minimum possible time."

Vigorous follow-up action, large-scale mechanization, selection of resourceful contractors, use of state-of-the-art equipment and IT solutions,

English-speaking personnel with specialized technical experience makes India one of the best providers of manpower in the international market. Many foreign majors such as Tecnimont and Toyo have handed over a slew of international projects, won by their parent firms, to Indian subsidiaries for execution.

Indian engineers and technicians are increasingly being deployed for overseas projects through Indian as well as

Based on IIP, the capital goods sector posted a growth of 15 percent during April-October 2006-07. And as the power sector finally takes off, thanks to the new policy of promoting ultra mega power plants, the heavy electrical industry is on a roll. Whether it is boilers, turbo generators, various types of turbines, transformers, switchgears and other allied items, Indian companies are taking center stage in the international arena.

THEIR ONLY ONE

By Jhareswar Chattopadhyay

Translated by Tirna Ray

'Their Only One' is an emotional story about a couple on their way back from Bangalore, leaving their only child in an engineering college hostel. This is the first time that they will be away from their son. Chattopadhyay has masterfully created a situation where the boundaries of locale collapse before the onslaught of time as history, history as time. The story was first published as 'Old Block New Block' in *Sambad Pratidin*, Kolkata, in March 2002. Chattopadhyay has received several awards including the Bibhuti Bhushan Puraskar, the Soapan Puraskar, and the Panchajanya Puraskar.

Nirmala fastened the loops of the mosquito net on the bedposts and sighed. Paramesh lay on the bed, on his side, his face buried in the pillow. Quiet. Nirmala undid her hair, setting the bangles and shankha around her wrist tinkling. Paramesh turned over to look at her, and Nirmala said morosely, "Here are we lying in the comfort of a mattress. And he in that narrow iron bed."

"That's the way hostel beds are."

"But aren't they a little too cramped?" Nirmala asked, tucking in the net. "Hmm."

The memories ... still so fresh and abundant. Even the day before they left for this place, Nirmala tucked in the mosquito net for Suman. Today at the hostel, has the boy tucked in his net ...

"The bedposts at the hostel are so wobbly. Will he be able to fix the net?" Paramesh feigned confidence, reassuring her. "Three boys together in a room. They'll manage, don't worry."

The hotel room. Grills behind glass sheets, heavy curtains against the windows. A night lamp suffused one corner. In the soft light, Nirmala ran her fingers through her hair. The boy, she thought, was so studious. At home, he didn't care to eat unless she nagged him. Like a child. Every time he misplaced a shirt, pants, books, he screamed, Ma-a-a-a ...

"Ma-a-a-a." The cry caught Nirmala unawares. She rushed to the window. The curtains rippled. There were ripples in Nirmala's heart. Who! Was Suman outside the window? Nirmala jerked the curtain aside. On the main road, the streetlights dozed. The huge life insurance hoarding was lit by bulbs



in a wire frame that set its logo — the flame in the safety of cupped palms — flickering. The tall buildings looked bleak with deserted attics. The DV Campus, the school grounds, its residences, the hills, its boulders — all were heavy with night and darkness.

About two kilometers away was Suman's college, opposite which stood the hostel building — a solid structure of cement and stone, each one by one-and-a-half-foot wide — massive.

Asleep in the old block and new block were six or seven hundred first, second ... fourth years. The departments of Mechanical, Information Technology — all in one block. Computer Science, Metallurgy, Textile, Management in the other.

Dew misted the halogen lights on either side of the hostel gate. Nirmala's eyes grew misty. Paramesh asked soft-

ly, "Can't sleep?" Listless, Nirmala rested her head on the pillow, next to Paramesh's.

And then, suddenly, she was hugging him, saying softly, "Listen ..."

"Hmm?"

"If we had another one ..."

Her eyes glistened. Her cheek on Paramesh's chest, tears soaked his chest. The appeal was poignant, but there was no passion in the embrace. A dying fire, a moving submission. Paramesh's body was rigid, reserved. "Remember those times? So many family responsibilities. Even if we had had another one, could we have brought up the child properly?"

"Perhaps not."

"Then?"

Paramesh wasn't sure whether his question reflected restraint, or was merely evading the sense of loss. Despite the apparent warmth of the embrace, her voice was sad. "It would have been a financial strain. It would have been hard, but now, it is even harder."

Paramesh didn't try to find an answer. Decades of rationalizing shattered in one blow. Nirmala's tears melted his heart.

"Maybe it is a bit too late," he whispered, gathering himself together, trying to focus on what needed to be done the next day. Then, he said gently, "Sleep. We'll have to catch the train tomorrow."

Geyser water in the hotel bathroom. After a quick bath, Nirmala went up to the terrace to dry her synthetic sari. Beyond the houses and factory chimneys, beyond the coconut groves that graced the neighborhood, lay the lush fields. The floating clouds engulfed the

farmlands that cultivated leaf food for the caterpillars that made pure silk. A wedge of sun swept aside the wet clouds in the eastern sky. The synthetic sari basked in the warm breeze.

Nirmala gazed at the massive Nandi Hills as she combed out her wet hair. How they stooped, enduring the stony burden of centuries, their corrugated peaks distributing the load on knees, elbows, neck and back. Black clouds hovered behind the white before engaging the crests in a misty game.

Nirmala felt the sting of brittle rain-drops on cheeks and hands. From the staircase she called out to Paramesh, "Can you come up?" Towel and pajama in the big bag; paste, brush, soap and razor in the bag pockets, Paramesh was packing. He came to the door. "Coming."

"Lock the door behind you."

The terrace: only a few steps from the third floor. Nirmala drew his attention to the peaks. Black, knotty clouds spreadeagled against them. The thirsty stones seemed to soften, as if to wring out the old water sucked up from the heart of Nature over the centuries.

"Remember the trip the college organized on Suman's first day, when parents and freshers went around the place? Did we visit this mountain cradle?" Paramesh, in full-sleeved shirt and a light woolen jacket, adjusted his glasses to look into the distance.

"Mudenahalli village."

"Hmm. Where we saw the museum — his coat-pant, books, glasses, pen."

"You mean, M. Vishweshvaraiya's? There are any number of technical colleges named after him."

Nirmala's forehead wrinkled as she tried to picture the hill-village. "Vishweshvaraiyaji was just a village boy, son of a farmer. Wasn't he?"

"Yes, his life story is engraved on the marble slab."

"A farmer's son grew up to be such a successful engineer!"

Paramesh laughed. "Just a successful engineer? He even gave Gandhiji moments of worry. When Gandhiji appealed to the nation to spin the charkha, produce khadi, Vishweshvaraiya's inspiring line was: Industri-

alize! Or else, a country with millions of people will just lag behind."

But Nirmala was not listening. She stood gazing at the village against the hills. "Maybe not as big, but even if our Suman could be a little like him and do something with his life."

The sky, framed by the bus window. Nirmala looked at the floating clouds and said, "It might rain." The bus crossed the steep slope of the road. Paramesh said, "The sky here is so unpredictable..." Before he finished, the conductor rang the bell, "College-stop." They got off.

A bag on Paramesh's shoulder. VIP suitcase in Nirmala's hand. A cloth festoon across a tree: Cyber Stop. New comp lingo on the tree's worn out, age-old bark. Here was the iron gate. The engineering college campus. Fenced gardens, fields, tar-coated paths, a sprawling three-storied building. The white house behind was the workshop. Looking at all of this for one last time, Paramesh was lost in thought. "Living so far away was the boy's destiny, away from his parents... food habits... language... state... was everything preordained..."

Nirmala glanced at the empty college premises, the guardhouse. In a few hours we'll be going back, she thought, we'll leave this place, this state and return to our own territory. But Suman... he'll continue to stay on. Till yesterday, he tossed his bag on the bed as soon as he was home from school, and shouted, Maa... give me some-

Paramesh passed on all his dreams and hopes as he took the hand of his only child. The contact ripped through his soul leaving countless gaping holes. Its warmth, chilling him to the bone, as something inside him died

thing to eat. Here at the hostel who's going to do all that for him?

Nirmala's eyes were brimming over.

Quite a few private cars and KSTC buses went by. Paramesh said, "Come, let's cross. Let's go to the hostel."

The bag on Paramesh's shoulders was heavy. So was his heart. Suman-ré, if only you had managed to rank well in the West Bengal Joint Entrance exam. Down on the list, lost, everybody advised: You'll just about manage to get him into one of the new engineering colleges here. Try outside Kolkata. It would be a wise career move. Well Suman, you've made it to a good college, a good branch. But...

The watchman stopped them at the hostel entrance. "Where to?"

"Room number 104."

Paramesh knocked at the door. The bolt was sliding back. Nirmala rushed in asking, "What are you still doing here? Don't you have a class?"

"Yes."

"Why aren't you ready yet?"

"Loo and brush over. Now I'll take a bath."

"When do your classes start?" Nirmala asked while checking Suman's mosquito net. It was still draped. She started unfastening the loops from the stands. Paramesh stopped her. "Let him learn to do things for himself. Can you do that for him everyday?"

"I know, but at least as long as I am here."

Paramesh pointed to the other two beds. "Then do it for them too."

One was Bharat Prakash's. He was from UP. The bed on this side, still a mess, belonged to Ritesh from Bihar who said, "Aunty, please, I'll manage."

"You'll have to, in any case. But let me do it for you today since your mother is not here."

"Thank you Aunty."

He was in a wet towel and a little self-conscious about changing in front of Aunty. Paramesh looked at Nirmala, "Let's go. He's uncomfortable."

As they stepped outside, they bumped into the pant-shirt gentleman. His middle-aged wife, in a green shawl and sweater, was beside him. They had bags in their hands and on their shoul-

ders. Paramesh paused a little and asked, "Leaving today?"

"What else?"

"Which room is your son in?" "125."

"Branch?"

"Mechanical."

"Your room number?" asked the man.

"Right here, this one."

The wife asked, "Branch?"

"Telecom."

"Good. We got our son into the mainstream."

"Right decision, but ..."

The couple looked at them rather quizzically.

"Our only child. Leaving him here is a little painful," said Paramesh lamely.

The gentleman thrust his hands into his pant pockets and said gravely, "No choice. We have to leave them for the sake of their future."

Paramesh accepted his logic. "How many children, Dada?"

The green shawl, fair mother looked pale. "Only one child."

"Oh." The words were a balm on Paramesh's heart.

"Where do you stay?"

"Durgapur."

The minutes were ticking away on the dial of the watch. The man took two steps forward on the mosaic floor and said, "Okay. Thank you."

The corridor took a turn after room 106. Within a few steps another couple called out from the other side: "What news?"

"All's fine. How come you're here? We thought you had a daughter."

"We just met her at the town hostel. A friend's son has got into Information Technology. We were here to see him."

"Room number?"

"Umm... new block," said the wife.

Paramesh walked with them. "You are from Salt Lake, aren't you?"

"Yes. Near tank No. 8," the husband mumbled.

Paramesh asked in a low voice, "How does it feel to leave her behind?"

The man stopped walking. Face to face with Paramesh, he looked him straight in the eyes.

"Actually, our only child. Painful..."

"I know." Paramesh's voice was gruff.

The wife dragged a button into the buttonhole of the sweater, trying carefully to hide the twitching pain in her chest. "What to do? Shouldn't we help her stand on her own feet? In Kolkata, even if you raise an objection they don't care to show you your answer sheet. And here, they give you a copy of the answer script at the exam hall itself. So modern..."

"Absolutely. Besides, everything here is computerized."

Paramesh, walking with them, reached the veranda office room. A few parents were sitting anxiously on the chairs and bench. A burnished bench with a backrest, stuffed with foam. The day's dailies, *Deccan Herald*, *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, and *Pragyabani* in Kannada, were strewn on the center table.

An electronic clock on the wall. How much can these mere dials absorb from the orbit of eternity? It can at best keep ticking and convey the half-nibbled truths of our roots to contemporary experience.

8.40 am. Students from the old block and the new block rushed out in shirt-pant-shoe-tie, some clutching files, others, with textbooks, practical notebooks and graphics-scales stuffed into carry bags. A few parents walked alongside their children.

"Don't skip your meals. Eat properly," Nirmala urged Suman. There's a shop outside. You can buy fruit, eggs and milk from there, but..."

Paramesh said, "Suman, you're here to build your career. To become capable. To stand on your own feet. Don't get led away by friends. Don't waste your time. Stay out of trouble."

Suman slowed down to look at his father, and said, "Okay."

"We will be about two thousand miles away. We can't see you or guide you. You have to make your own decisions, what's good and what's bad." They crossed the deodar trees and the neatly trimmed plants in the garden.

Nirmala said, "Come, Suman let me help you cross the road. The way I did when you were in KG."

A childish smile flashed on Suman's pensive face.

"Always be careful. The traffic here is heavy." Paramesh was still talking when the road ended at the college gate. Suman stretched out his hand. Paramesh passed on all his dreams and hopes as he took the hand of his only child. The contact ripped through his soul leaving countless gaping holes. Its warmth, chilling him to the bone, as something inside him died.

Nirmala pulled Suman close. "Take care," she said tenderly. "We'll leave now..."

The Godavari's swelling waves welled up in Nirmala's eyes even before her words found voice.

The platform. The afternoon train was in. Paramesh checked the reservation list before they got into the coach and sat down. Side by side. Paramesh looked out of the window.

"If Suman stayed with us he'd have at best done Math or Physics honors," he said.

"What else?"

The window's sky flaunted a thick curl of clouds. Nirmala touched her forehead in prayer. Now, even if I want to, I can't take a bus to Suman. The platform is far behind. So is my precious one. Alone. Out of sight. The thought cut through Nirmala's inner self, jolting her entire being, and all promises and possibilities, career viabilities, campus interviews, fluency in Hindi and English in six months, a guaranteed job, new avenues — everything was washed away, rinsed clean.

Paramesh wiped his eyes. The passengers opposite sat staring at them, quietly. Paramesh called to Nirmala softly, "Listen ..."

Nirmala looked up with wet eyes.

To draw her out of her just-devastated world, Paramesh attempted fables, proverbs, chronicles, but nothing worked. He recalled the last few days. So many people, parents... He began to narrate those stories, the psalms of this newfound world. Didn't you see. Almost all of them ... so many ... so many of them, with just one, their only one. However many, they are all leaving their only child behind.

Irrfan Khan nominated for Spirit Awards in US

The American company Film Independent, which honors independent films and filmmakers across the world, has announced nominations for its 2008 Spirit Awards. And one of the contenders is Bollywood actor Irrfan Khan.

He is rubbing shoulders in the best supporting actor category with the stalwarts of world cinema like Steve Zahn, Marcus Carl Franklin and Kene Holliday, for his performance as Tabu's quiet and progressive husband in 'The Namesake'.

The Spirit Awards, held a few days prior to the Oscar ceremony in Los Angeles, are usually seen as a precursor to the Oscars. An overjoyed Irrfan said: "Mira Nair got the hugely prestigious Gotham award, and I was there to watch this his-



toric moment. Barely 24 hours later comes this announcement about me.

"The Spirit Award is to me every bit as prestigious as the Oscars. Unlike the Oscars, it's a totally independent award based entirely on merit rather than lobbying. So whoever gets nominated gets in there solely by merit.

"I'm honored to be rubbing shoulders with the likes of Don Cheadle, Frank Langella and Philip Seymour Hoffman (all nominated in the best-actor category). Philip is my favorite actor in the world."

In fact, Irrfan met with his favorite actor after the Gotham awards at a party. "His versatility has always taken my breath away. He started with just two scenes in 'Scent Of A Woman'. Somewhere I identify with him."

Indian filmmaker bags Commonwealth Award for 90-second movie



G.D. Jayalakshmi, a producer and director who worked for the BBC for 11 years, was awarded a top prize at the Commonwealth Vision

Awards 2007 for her film 'Paper! Paper!', at a ceremony at the Royal Commonwealth Society in London on December 6.

'Paper! Paper!' is a celebration of initiatives to recycle paper in India. According to Jayalakshmi, it "stands as an example and a symbol of traditional Indian values — under threat today but still surviving — to conserve anything that may be of use, to let nothing go to waste". London-based Jayalakshmi was highly commended for her 90-second work. It was her interpretation of the Vision Awards theme, "Changing communities, greening the globe". Jayalakshmi received the award from Vision Awards guest of honor, Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon.

The awards have seen a strong Indian presence, with another entrant of Indian origin who hails from Fiji being highly commended. Raltesh Chandra's film 'The Gill Family', which was co-directed with Robert Zraick, focuses on a "typical family" that lives under water, thanks to the effects of global warming.

Indian Idol Prashant Tamang wows audience in the US



Reigning Indian Idol Prashant Tamang recently completed a successful tour of the United States which started on December 1.

After performing to packed houses in Washington D.C. and Boston, the 24-year-old from Darjeeling wowed audiences with his Hindi and Nepali songs in New York City on December 8 and in Atlanta the next day. At his first show in Washington, a full-house audience asked Tamang for encores of 'Yo Maan Ta Mero Nepali Ho'.

The song was a hit the next evening at Boston too, where the audiences danced and sang along with him. At both places the Kolkata policeman-turned-music star invited women from the audience to dance with him on stage as he sang romantic Bollywood ballads.

Nepali pop icons also shared the stage with him even as Nepali community leaders felicitated him.

Tamang's American tour was organized by Moonlight Records and PartyNepal.com.

Online Indian art auction mops up \$8 million

Even as S.H. Raza's 'Maha Bindu' fetched \$652,000 beating Tyeb Mehta's 'Untitled', which sold at \$602,500, Saffronart's two-day



online auction of Indian art closed on December 6 realizing a total sale value of about \$8 million from 110 lots representing 36 artists.

Attracting almost 500 bidders from over 25 countries, the sale notched an increase in average lot price from Saffronart's June auction and other auctions of modern Indian art held in New York in September, underscoring buyers' increasing confidence in the market.

In addition, the fact that almost a third of those who won, were new bidders reflected the continuing global expansion of the buyer base for Indian art.

In Raza's 'Maha Bindu' (1988), the artist's favorite motif and bindu, pulsates within a square, much like the ancient Hindu and Buddhist mandalas that described the sacred universe.

In Mehta's 'Untitled' (2000) the androgynous figure careening downwards in endless freefall conveys the weight of personal and public violence in shaping the human experience today.

■ CHRISTMAS



As part of its community outreach program, the Indian Embassy in Washington celebrated Christmas at the Embassy Residence on December 16.

Over 275 guests from the Washington Metropolitan Area, of all religions, attended the function. The Embassy Residence was adorned with colorful lights and Christmas decorations.

Ambassador Ronen Sen welcomed the gathering after the invocation by Solomon Isaac of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Following the Ambassador's speech, Reverend Dr. Moses Sangha (senior pastor of the Methodist Church of Indian origin) delivered the Christmas message, in which he talked about the virtue of humility and how the teachings of Jesus had an

universal appeal, even today.

Albert Wynn Congressman, representing 4th Congressional District of Maryland, then spoke eloquently about Indian Americans.

Adding to the celebrations and gaiety was a lively cultural program, comprising carol singing and dance.

The function concluded with a sumptuous Christmas dinner.

■ HANUKKAH



As part of its community outreach program, the Indian Embassy in Washington celebrated the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, at the Embassy Residence on December 9.

Over 350 Jewish of the Washington Metropolitan Area, representing major American Jewish organizations, attended the function. There were representatives from other Indian American communities as well. The Embassy Residence was adorned with scores of colorful lights and symbols representing Indian Jewish traditions.

Ambassador Ronen Sen welcomed the gathering after the traditional singing of 'MAOR T'ZUR' and gave a short speech highlighting the various contributions of the Jewish community in India.

Following the Ambassador's speech, H.E. Sallai Meridor, the Ambassador of Israel to the U.S., eloquently spoke about the growing Indo-Israel friendship and the role-played by the Jewish community in the U.S., on issues concerning both India and Israel.

Dan Mariaschin, executive vice-president of B'nai B'rith International and James Busis, director, Asia & Pacific Rim Institute, AJC, also spoke on the occasion.

Adding to the celebrations and gaiety were musical performances comprising Hanukkah songs in Hebrew and English by Teddy Klaus, music director at Temple Micah in Washington D.C. and Jewish Indian instrumental music by a popular Jewish band.

The function concluded with a sumptuous kosher-Indian dinner enthusiastically partaken by the guests.



COORG: Scotland of India

Misty hills, lush forest, acres of tea and coffee plantation, orange groves, undulating streets and breathtaking views make Coorg, the district headquarters of Kodagu and dubbed the 'Scotland of India', an unforgettable holiday destination. Set amidst verdant valleys, imposing mountains and teak wood forests, this is one of the most beautiful hill stations of Karnataka.

But what strikes a first-time visitor is its stunning beauty — both, of nature and of its people. Not only is Coorg a

beautiful place but the people are also equally good looking. However, texts do not speak much of their origins. One theory holds that the 2,500-year-old civilization of the Kodavas has evolved from a synthesis of people that originally lived in the region of Oman and Yemen. Another belief claims that Scythian Greek soldiers of Alexander stayed on after his return and married the local women of Kodagu.

Coorg is also called the land of generals — Field Marshall Cariappa, the first Commander-in-Chief of India and General Thimmayya, were among

India's finest soldiers. Almost every household has at least one person serving in the defense force. Perhaps as a tribute to the Kodavas' 'martial origins', the birth of a male child is celebrated with a gun salute!

Coorg is known for the great outdoors and has many verdant trekking routes in the midst of forests and hills. It's best to go in October to February. For a lazy vacation, try fishing in Valanoor. It is the backwater of River Cauvery which itself is said to originate in a hill-top source called Thalai Cauvery. For some fast-paced white water rafting, visit the Upper Barapole River, to the south of Coorg in Brahmagiri. Coorg is a shopper's paradise. Don't leave without their coffee, honey, spices, cardamom, pepper and pineapple papads. Coorgi silk saris are famous and are draped in a unique way.

MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

Madikeri Fort: This 19th-century fort, at the heart of Coorg, houses a temple, a chapel, prison and a small museum.

Raja's Seat: According to legend, the kings of Kodagu spent their evenings here. But what's unforgettable about Raja's Seat is the spectacular sunset that one can enjoy from here.

Iruppu Falls: A sacred spot in south Kodagu on the Brahmagiri range. River Lakshmanatirtha flows nearby. Legend says that Lord Rama and Lord Lakshmana passed this way while looking for Sita. Rama asked Lakshmana to fetch some drinking water for him. Lakshmana shot an arrow into Brahmagiri hills and brought into being the river Lakshmanatirtha. The place is said to possess cleansing powers.

Dubare: This is mainly an elephant-capturing and training camp of the Forest Department, at the edge of the Dubare Forest. The wild elephants here are tamed and trained with the help of other tamed elephants and local tribes (the Kurubas).

Thalai Cauvery: Forty-six kilometres west of Coorg is Thalai Cauvery, the birthplace of Cauvery River. The source of the river is a tiny perennial spring at the base of a temple. ■

! The spirit of Eid



Indian devouts embrace each other after attending special prayers during Eid al-Adha at the famous Jama Masjid Mosque, in Delhi, on December 21. The Eid al-Adha or Feast of Sacrifice, marks the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca and is celebrated in remembrance of Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son to God.

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