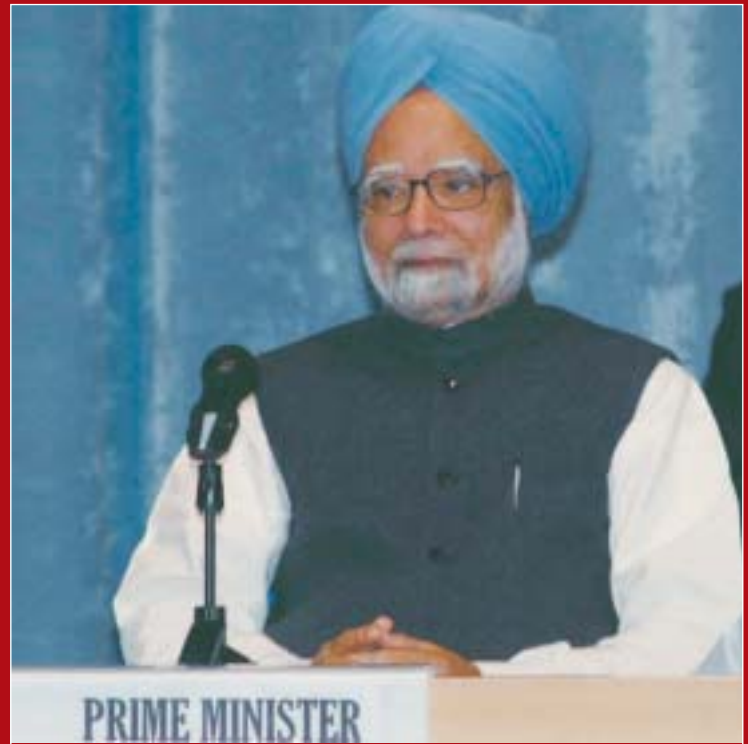


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Our foreign policy should be an extension of our enlightened national interests: PM



Above: Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh addressing the Heads of Missions Conference in New Delhi on December 23.



From left: Director General of ICCR Pavan Verma, Ambassador to Turkey R.S. Jassal and Ambassador to the USA Ronen Sen at the Heads of Missions Conference in New Delhi.

■ State-owned telecom major MTNL and BSNL become the first firms in India to launch 3G services.

■ India gifts \$4.5 mn to Harvard University to establish a fund to provide fellowship to students from India.

■ Lockheed Martin's India Innovation Growth Program receives a qualitative boost in India.

Our foreign policy should be an extension of our enlightened national interests: PM



Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh addressing the Heads of Missions Conference in New Delhi on December 23.

A three-day conference of Indian Heads of Missions (Ambassadors and High Commissioners) was inaugurated by External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee in New Delhi on December 22. The conference was organized by the Ministry of External Affairs. Altogether, 114 envoys took part in the meet.

Addressing the conference on December 23, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh emphasized that India's foreign policy should be an extension of "our enlightened national interests".

"The biggest challenges which the country faces are the removal of poverty, disease and ignorance," the Prime Minister said. "The removal of poverty and emancipation of our people should be given pride of place in India's foreign policy. India's diplomatic efforts should be geared to remov-

ing obstacles which stand in the way of achieving these objectives. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring food security, the management of water resources, energy security and overcoming technology denial regimes," Dr. Singh added.

The Prime Minister noted that globalization had come to stay, and interdependence among nations was today a fact of life. "The implication of this was that the destinies of nations were increasingly inter-linked. India was a country that was not well endowed with natural resources on a per capita basis, and therefore India would have to be a major trading nation of the world. Indian diplomacy should be geared to ensuring an open and transparent multilateral trading system, and to overcoming barriers to Indian trade."

The Prime Minister also referred to the international security environment, and said that threats such as terrorism and piracy required a well thought-out counter

strategy. India, he said, has sought peace and stability in its neighborhood, but the situation was "worrisome" as non-state actors were practicing terrorism while being actively aided and abetted by state establishments.

Dr. Singh stated that the Mumbai terror attacks were an assault on India's ambitions to emerge as an economic power and the country would not accept a situation where terrorism was used as an instrument to cripple India's economy, or the values it stood for.

In conclusion, the Prime Minister said that India was destined to become a major economic and knowledge power, which was at peace with itself. India's diplomatic efforts should be geared in this direction and reflect the aspirations of its people.

Indian economy has proven to be resilient and competitive: Pranab Mukherjee



External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee with Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon at the Heads of Missions Conference in New Delhi on December 22.

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee delivered the inaugural address at the Heads of Missions Conference on December 22 at the DRDO Bhavan in New Delhi. He highlighted the way India had emerged successfully on the global front and asked the Heads of Indian Missions to explore ways to manage the global financial crisis and place the country in a position to play a role in any future international economic crisis. “The world is in the midst of transition in both the political and economic spheres,” Mukherjee said.

“The global economic crisis shows no sign of ending soon. Issues of energy, environment, food security and water, to name a few, are becoming more complex. Above all, the effects of the processes of globalization are throwing up new challenges, but they also provide opportunities for our national endeavors. We have to ensure that our interests and security are safeguarded and promoted. As a stakeholder in the international system, we

need to manage the strategic shifts that are under way to maintain our stability and security and bring prosperity to our people.” **Excerpts:**

■ We live in a difficult neighborhood. Each of our neighbors is undergoing a domestic transition. It is heartening to note that most of these transitions are proceeding smoothly and have led to the spread of democracy. Our relations with each of our neighbors, apart from Pakistan, are better than before. Both Nepal and Bhutan have new democratically elected governments and Bangladesh is soon going to hold its national elections. It is also a matter of some satisfaction that we have been a factor for stability and peace in the region and our economic growth is having an impact beyond our borders.

■ Today, our relations with all the world’s major powers are much deeper and stronger than before. We are engaged in establishing strategic partnerships and expanding the scope and depth of our economic and

strategic interaction with different countries, groupings and regions — whether it is the United States, Russia, China, Japan, European Union, South East Asia, Central Asia, IBSA or many others with whom we are developing a fruitful and active dialogue. Our relations with Africa got a major fillip with the first India-Africa Summit earlier this year.

■ The successful completion of the India-U.S. Civil Nuclear Initiative is a major diplomatic achievement. It is the first time that we have been able to move the international system to change long established rules in our favor. From being a target of the technology denial regimes we are now regarded as a partner.

■ The international financial and economic crisis presents another set of transitional challenges for us. From our perspective, we need to see how we can manage the crisis and also place ourselves in a position so that we can play a role in any future global financial or political structure. The challenge for us is to shape a set of policies encompassing both the security and foreign dimension such that we can ensure an external environment conducive to India’s transformation and continued development.

■ On the economic dimension, India’s economy has proven to be both outward looking, competitive and resilient. Our companies are no longer shy in exploring new opportunities and our manufacturing is setting new standards and earning a healthy reputation. This can be utilized to enhance our reach and effectiveness in other countries.”

■ The Indian Diaspora is an asset. They are not only affluent in many countries and are also influential, being well integrated with their local communities. The efforts of previous years to engage them has proven to be beneficial and they can be a source of strength. We need to continue to nurture them.

Senator Kerry meets Prime Minister



U.S. Senator John Kerry calling on Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on December 15.

Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon visits US



Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon visited the U.S. on December 1-2. The Foreign Secretary met Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte and held extended discussions, including over lunch, with Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Ambassador William Burns.

The meetings covered a range of bilateral issues, including counter terrorism cooperation, anti-piracy coordination, the India-U.S. Civil Nuclear Initiative, defense trade, space cooperation and furthering economic and investment relations between the two countries.

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi called Foreign Secretary to convey condolences over the Mumbai terror attacks. The Foreign Secretary also had meetings on the Hill, including with House Majority Leader Congressman Steny Hoyer; Chairman of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee Senator Christopher Dodd; Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Senator Richard G. Lugar; and Ranking Minority Member for the Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Chuck Hagel. Menon also had a conversation with Senator John Kerry, the Chairman of the Sub Committee on Near East & Central & South Asia in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

He held meetings with leaders of several think-tanks and influential opinion-makers. In every conversation, support and commitment was articulated to the transformed relationship, and desire expressed to sustain the momentum through the present transition in the U.S. and beyond. All the interlocutors expressed sympathy and support to the Government and people of India in the context of the terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte visits India

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte paid a day-long visit on December 12 to India in the aftermath of the Mumbai terror attacks. In New Delhi, Negroponte met External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon, and held a “very good discussion” with National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan.

Later, addressing a press conference, Negroponte said: “In all of these meetings, I had an opportunity to extend the condolences of the United States to the people and to the Government of India for the terrible attacks that occurred in India, in Bombay recently. We deplore them, we think that these were dastardly acts, and, of course, in addition to

the fact that India has been seriously aggrieved, there were United States casualties as well. So we are also victims of these attacks. We think it is imperative that these attacks be thoroughly investigated and we think it is also imperative that those responsible for perpetrating these attacks be brought to account. So the effort at the moment is concentrated on investigating these attacks and bringing those responsible to account.”

On the investigation, the Deputy Secretary of State said: “We’re cooperating in this effort; obviously the Government of India is in the lead, but all of our diplomatic partners have a responsibility to contribute to this effort.”

India, US sign MoU to intensify research for gas hydrates

The Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH) of India, on behalf of the National Gas Hydrate Program, signed an MoU with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on December 16 on development of Gas Hydrate resources in India. The MoU was signed by V. K. Sibal, Director General of DGH, and Mark Myers, Director of USGS, in Washington, in the presence of Secretary, Petroleum, R.S. Pandey.

The MoU aims at scientific and technical cooperation in the field of gas hydrate research with emphasis on

marine science investigations, including resource exploration and assessment; hazard and environmental issues associated with the occurrence of gas hydrates; assessment of energy resource potential of gas hydrates; field studies in support of gas hydrate research; joint research pertaining to exploration and exploitation of gas hydrates and information systems. India, along with the U.S. and Japan, is a leading country having found gas hydrates. India’s gas hydrates occurrences in KG, Mahanadi and Andaman waters are the thickest and deepest in the world.

Ambassador initials 'India Fellowships'



Harvard Fellowships in honor of Professor Amartya Sen: (From left) Prof. Amartya Sen, Dr. Drew Gilpin Faust, President, Harvard University, Ambassador Ronen Sen and Prof. Sugata Bose, Director, South Asia Initiative, Harvard University.

Photo Credit: Stephanie Mitchell, Harvard University News Photographer

Ambassador and Mrs. Sen attended the 31st Annual Festival of Lights organized by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints on December 4. Sen was the Honored Speaker at the event which was attended by a number of Ambassadors, Members of the U.S. Congress, and prominent persons of different faiths. Apart from Sen, the speakers on the occasion were J.W. Marriot, Elder Neil L. Anderson, U.S. Senator Robert F. Bennet and U.S. Senator Gordon H. Smith. The Ambassador and Elder Anderson together illuminated 450,000 lights, ushering in the Christmas season. In his remarks, Sen observed that "in this lighting ceremony, that brings people from different nations and faiths together, I see the ray of light that connects all humanity".

On December 6, the Ambassador hosted a dinner for the participants of the "US-India Strategic Dialogue" organized by the Aspen Strategy Group and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in Washington

D.C. from December 5-9. The Indian delegation, including CEOs, Members of Parliament and prominent opinion makers, was co-chaired by Ambassador S.K. Lambah, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister, and Tarun Das, Chief Mentor CII and President of the Aspen Institute in India. The U.S. team, co-chaired by Harvard University Professor Joseph Nye and General Brent Scowcroft, had several prominent participants including Madeleine Albright, Richard Danzig, Samuel Berger and Rick Inderfurth. The Indian delegation also had meetings with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor Steve Hadley, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England, Senator John Kerry and others.

On December 10, the Ambassador and the President of Harvard University, Drew Gilpin Faust, signed an agreement to establish a Fund called 'India Fellowships' given in honor of Amartya Sen, recognizing the Bharat Ratna recipient and Nobel Laureate on his 75th birthday. A

grant of \$4.5 million was given by the Government of India to this Fund, which would be used to provide Fellowships to deserving students from India.

Ambassador Sen described Professor Sen, a Nobel Laureate and the recipient of the Bharat Ratna (India's highest civilian award), as a great son of India and one of the world's foremost contemporary thinkers. He expressed confidence that the Fund will further deepen the strong bonds between Harvard University and India; expand the university's impressive scholarship on India, especially at the University's South Asia Initiative, and open new opportunities for gifted scholars from India to study at one of the world's premier universities.

Harvard University President Drew Faust said that Professor Sen not only symbolized Harvard's outstanding academic standards but was also a deeply valued link between India and the University.

Professor Amartya Sen said, "I am



Festival of Lights: Ambassador Sen with Hon'ble Elder Neil L. Andersen.

delighted that the gift will help bright Indian students to come to Harvard. The students receiving the India Fellowships will have the opportunity of studying at what is perhaps the best university in the world, and Harvard too will benefit from having talented students who could not otherwise afford to come here. Since I see myself mainly as a teacher — and only occasionally as a researcher — I am very happy that the kind gift of the Government will be used for the education of Indian students.”

Later on December 10, Ambassador and Mrs. Sen attended the ceremony at the U.S. Library of Congress where the \$1 million Kluge Prize was awarded jointly to Professor Emeritus Romila Thapar of Jawaharlal Nehru University and Professor Robert Lamont Brown of Princeton University for Lifetime Achievement in the Study of Humanity. A felicitation message from Sen was included in brochure brought out on the occasion.

On December 14, a Christmas

reception was hosted by Ambassador and Mrs. Sen at their residence, which was attended by prominent members of the Indian community of different Christian denominations and of other faiths. Those who addressed the gathering included Dr. Jan Paulsen, President of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Sen attended the Heads of Mission Conference in New Delhi from December 22 to 24. The Conference was inaugurated by Minister of External Affairs, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, who also presided over the concluding session. It was addressed by the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, and interactive sessions were held with several Union Ministers. The Heads of Mission were received by the President of India, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil. Sen also had separate meetings with the Prime Minister, External Affairs Minister, Defence Minister and other Union Ministers during his stay in New Delhi.

On December 28, Sen hosted Hannukah celebrations at his residence, which was attended by many prominent members of the Jewish community from all walks of life, as well as those from other faiths. After the invocation by Nissim and Lavina Reuben and welcoming remarks by Sen, those who spoke on the occasion were Ambassador of Israel, Sallai Meridor, Rabbi Levi Shemtov, Ambassador Peter Rosenblatt of the American Jewish Committee and Daniel Mariaschin of B'nai Birth International.

The Ambassador continued to receive letters throughout the month from Governors, U.S. Senators and Congressmen, Mayors, religious leaders, CEOs of major corporations, University Presidents, and people from all walks of life in the United States conveying sympathy and solidarity in the wake of the terrorist attack in Mumbai launched from Pakistan.

India's Telecom Sector touches New Heights

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh put the country on the global 3G map on December 1, when he launched the services on state-owned Mahanagar Telephone Nigam's (MTNL) network in New Delhi.

The 3G platform will enable telecommunication companies to offer high-end services, such as high-speed internet, video conferencing on mobiles, interactive gaming, ultra fast downloads of video and music clips, amongst other services.

MTNL became the first firm in India to launch these high-end services, which it has christened 'Jadoo'.

Jadoo was later commercially launched on December 12.

MTNL executives present at the event said that the Prime Minister had only kicked off the "soft launch" and that some parts of central Delhi would have free access to these services during the test phase.

"We will also launch 3G in Mumbai by the end of January 2009," MTNL CMD R.S.P. Sinha said.

MTNL will invest \$83.68 million to set up 3G networks across Delhi and Mumbai and is hoping to add 200,000 subscribers on this platform.



Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh launching MTNL's 3G services on December 1 in New Delhi.

The Government had allocated 3G radio frequencies to both MTNL and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) ahead of the auctions.

"After the auction, the Government will have to give us spectrum. We will take six months from the date of allotment of spectrum to launch 3G services. Airtel hopes to launch commercial 3G services by 2009-end," Manoj Kohli, CEO and joint MD of the private sector Bharti Airtel, said.

The Prime Minister expects the telecom subscriber base in the country to

touch 700 million by 2012, going by the massive number of monthly addition of new users.

India has seen a 23 percent growth in new internet connections for the quarter ended October. India has more than 41 million internet users, making it the eighth largest "connected" population in the world. Currently, 74 percent of all internet connections in India have speeds of over 256 kbps. In fact, the number of connections with speeds of 2mbps and above is also growing fast — from 4.6 percent of all connections in the second quarter to 5 percent in the third quarter.

The high-speed connections have also been made possible by the increasingly complex and growing grid of submarine, fibre-optic networks that now connect India with the rest of the world. For example, a consortium of 16 telecom companies is planning to build a 15,000 km submarine cable system that will link India with Europe through the Middle East. The project is expected to cost upwards of \$700 million and add 3.84 tbps of capacity.

The state-owned BSNL plans to offer high-speed internet access to 25,000 villages by the end of March 2009.

7

\$21.23 mn nanotech institute to be set up in B'lore

The Karnataka government has allotted 14 acres of government land for setting up the Institute of Nano Science and Technology in Bangalore. The centre will be set up under the guidance of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), with a \$21.23 million grant from the Government of India out of a budgetary provision of \$212.27 million for nanotechnology initiatives.

"The State Government is further planning to develop a Nano Park and Incubation Centre," Karnataka Home Minister V.S. Acharya said recently. Acharya was speaking on the occasion of the second edition of

'Bangalore Nano' where Vice President M. Hamid Ansari, Governor Rameshwar Thakur, Chairman of the Science Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, Dr. C.N.R Rao, and group president (Research & Technology) at Reliance Industries, Ajit Sapre, decided to call Bangalore the "Nanocity of India".

The Karnataka Government has promised to take every possible measure to encourage research and development in nanoscience and nanotechnology, create opportunities for the commercialization of nanoscience and facilitate development of small, medium and large-scale industries committed to nanotechnology.

Vice President Hamid Ansari said that it was now globally accepted that nanotechnology was dramatically changing the face of industry and economy and that it would be a transformative force in the future of India and the world.

Dr. Rao said that India could be a nanotechnology leader if it taps young talent, particularly from rural India. "Nanotechnology, with its own challenges, promises an exciting future for Karnataka and India," he said.

Later, Dr. Rao conducted a special session 'Nano for the Young', attended by over 300 students, professors and young scientists.

Corporate giants join hands for India-US research initiatives

IBM, Intel, Boeing, Lockheed Martin are among several large corporate houses supporting joint research initiatives between India and the U.S. in hi-tech areas.

Boeing, for example, has provided over \$6.4 million to IIT-Kanpur to work on applications of radio frequency identification devices technology. Lockheed Martin, the aerospace giant, has joined hands with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to launch an initiative to promote entrepreneurs.



Intel Corporation, DST and the Indo-U.S. Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF) have also joined hands to promote technology entrepreneurs in 2007. Each partner will invest about \$4.25 million. Two projects from

India have recently been selected for funding under the public-private-partnership initiative.

Giving these details, executive director of IUSSTF Arabinda Mitra, said that the Indo-U.S. Sub-Commission on Science and Technology Cooperation would play a major role in taking up mega projects in the near future.

Among the large projects, the Indo-U.S. Flux Programme, with a projected investment of up to \$ 42.45 million, is expected to get under way soon. The Khorana Exchange Program would be launched on January 9.

India continues to top Gartner's list of 30 offshoring destinations

India and China continue to hold their ground as the leaders for offshoring services, says Gartner. The research and advisory firm has assessed 72 countries as offshore locations to announce its Top 30 destinations.

The analysis showed that the dynamic nature of the market has seen a number of countries position themselves as credible alternatives to the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China).

Ten countries from Asia Pacific were represented in the 30 leading countries. These included the undisputed leader in offshore services, India, and the greatest challenger in terms of potential scale, China, said the report. The rest are a mix of mature environments that offer limited cost benefits, such as Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, and emerging

countries with a variety of challenges, but attractive costs, such as Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

"Countries such as Mexico, Poland and Vietnam have continued to strengthen their position against leading alternatives, while others have forced their way into the 'Top 30'," said Ian Marriott, research vice-president at Gartner.



GM to make India Asia-Pacific hub for power-trains



U.S. auto major General Motors on December 1 said that it was making India a power-trains development hub for the Asia-Pacific region.

The company's Indian subsidiary General Motors India (GMI) has already announced a total of \$500 million investments in the country to set up new car and power-train manufacturing facilities and that it would be hiring 500

people in the second-half of 2009. The manufacturing hub will cover countries like Australia, China and Korea.

In August 2008, GMI set up a new power-train facility at Talegaon with an initial investment of over \$200 million. This was in addition to more than \$300 million invested in its vehicles manufacturing facility, which has a capacity of 300,000 units. The power-train unit has a capacity of making 200,000 units a year. It is expandable up to 300,000 engines per year.

Indian biotech industry expected to grow despite global meltdown



India's biotechnology industry is confident of excellent augmentation in the coming years despite the current global meltdown.

Experts feel that the Indian biotechnology industry, which holds only 2 percent share of the global market, has the potential to grow and emerge as a global player. Expressing confidence that the Indian biotech industry would attain the target of \$5 billion by 2010, Kiran Majumdar Shaw, chairman and managing director of Biocon Limited, said that agri-biotech products and services would contribute substantially toward achieving this target.

According to a survey by Ernst and Young, India is projected as one of the emerging leaders in biotechnology, and is ranked third in the Asia-Pacific region, based on the number of biotech companies in the country. According to another survey conducted by the Association of Biotech Led Enterprises, the Indian biotech industry has reported a growth of 20 percent during the year 2007-08.

IBM signs outsourcing deal with Rajasthan's cooperative bank

IBM, the US-based IT giant, on December 15, said that it had signed a  customers," said Mukesh Modi, managing director of MNSB.

five-year outsourcing agreement for managing the IT infrastructure of Rajasthan-based Madhav Nagrik Shakari Bank (MNSB), a cooperative bank.


MNSB has plans to expand from its existing network of 25 branches in Rajasthan.

The bank also plans to offer services such as internet banking, mobile banking and ATM facilities to its semi-urban and rural area customers.

"In this age of technology-driven banking, even cooperative banks like ours are taking a leap in providing the best of banking experience to our

With IBM hosting the bank's entire IT infrastructure from its own data centers, the bank will be able to leverage the same world-class expertise that serves many of its larger enterprises as well as global clients.

Nipun Mehrotra, vice-president and general manager, Global Technology Services, IBM India/South Asia, said, "We will continue to expand our geographical reach and work with more clients like Madhav Bank."

The bank has completed 35 years of operation and has over 172,000 customers. 

Indian M&As pick steam in November

Corporate India is doing quite well, if one is to go by its performance in mergers and acquisitions (M&A), or by the investments it has been able to attract from private equity players.


Corporate India clocked \$3.4 billion worth of M&As during November 2008, compared to \$2.13 billion in the previous month (October 2008). The tally looks even better compared to November 2007 (\$850 million).

Surprisingly, even private equity (PE) investments in November 2008 picked up marginally, over October 2008. While 21 PE deals were announced with a value of \$449 million in November, 12 deals were registered in October, amounting to \$372 million. The first 11 months of this year have witnessed 295 PE deals with an announced value of \$10.11 billion, down from the 366 deals amounting to \$15.73 billion, during the corresponding period in 2007. Calendar year 2007 saw a total of 405 PE deals, valued at \$19.03 billion.

"Indian M&As have touched \$32

billion with 433 deals in the first 11 months which is a sign of maturity in the market," said H.V. Harish, partner at Grant Thornton, handling transaction advisory services.

In its monthly Dealtracker report, Grant Thornton has noted that the telecom sector is seeing sustained inbound investments. After witnessing significant deals such as Etisalat's investment in Swan Telecom and Telenor's investment in Unitech Wireless, the sector saw another large investment with NTT DoCoMo's stake acquisition in Tata Teleservices for \$2.7 billion.

Other sectors such as IT-ITeS, pharma and healthcare have also seen several transactions as well. In outbound deals, Cadila Healthcare acquired Etna Biotech for an undisclosed amount, as did Sun Pharma, which acquired Chattern Chemicals Inc. Super Religare Laboratories acquired Mena Healthcare for \$20 million. Plethico Pharma shelled out the same for a 20 percent acquisition of Sputnik Regional Aptika Holdings, aimed to push its retail foray. 

MIT to hold emerging technologies conference in New Delhi

EmTech, the prestigious emerging technologies conference of MIT's *Technology Review*, will be held in New Delhi in March 2009.

This is for the first time that the prestigious EmTech conference, which is attended by nearly 100 leading tech and business visionaries of the world, is being held outside the U.S. after it was launched eight years ago.

"Asian nations became giants by exporting IT services, drug design and embedded systems to the world. By bringing EmTech 2009 to the Indian shores, we hope to bring into sharper focus emerging technology innovations from Asia and Australia," said Jason Pontin, Editor-in-Chief and Publisher of *Technology Review*.

The two-day event, to be held in partnership with CyberMedia, would also mark the launch of the Indian edition of *Technology Review*, the world's oldest technology publication, founded in 1899.

FMCG sector to grow by 25 percent despite slowdown: Assocham

Despite the global economic slowdown, the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector in India will grow at 25 percent and reach \$25 billion, said a report by an industry lobby, released in New Delhi on December 10. According to the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham), the FMCG sector is expected to touch \$25 billion by the end of 2008, as against \$20 billion in 2007.

According to the report, the growth of FMCG in rural areas alone would touch \$5 billion by the end of December 2008. In 2007, rural FMCG sales stood at \$3 billion, Assocham said.

The study is based on the feedback given by major FMCG players like Hindustan Unilever, Godrej, Dabur, ITC, Johnson and Johnson, Procter and Gamble, Reckitt and Benckiser, Parley, Britannia and Nestle.

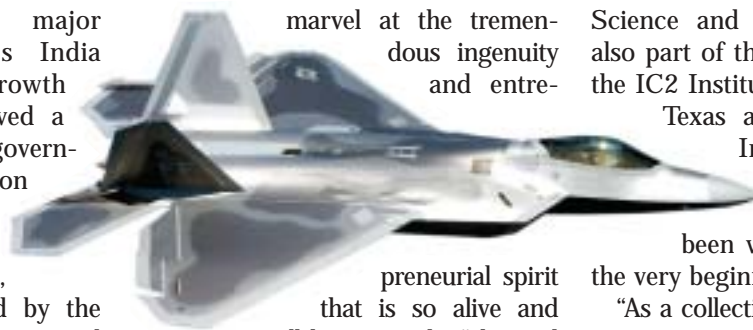
The deeper market penetration in rural India, Assocham said, has been driven by higher consumption of products, especially consumer durables. The study said that the rural market accounts for half the total market for television sets, fans, pressure cookers, bicycles, washing soaps, blades, tea, salt and tooth powder.

Lockheed Martin initiative receives government boost

U.S. aerospace major Lockheed Martin's India Innovation Growth Program (IIGP) has received a qualitative boost with a key government department coming on board to promote entrepreneurship in the country.

As it enters its third year, the IIGP will be partnered by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) for at least the next two years, if not longer, Ray Johnson, Lockheed Martin's senior vice-president and chief technology officer, said.

"As we are about to enter the third year of the program, I can't help but



marvel at the tremendous ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit

that is so alive and well here in India," he said in a media briefing in New Delhi on December 3.

According to the official, the program represents "the best possible partnership" between the Government, industry and academia.

Along with DST, the Indo-U.S.

Science and Technology Forum is also part of the program, apart from the IC2 Institute of the University of Texas and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry that have been with the initiative from the very beginning.

"As a collective team we are making a positive impact, much faster than anyone could have predicted," Johnson said.

According to Lockheed Martin, the nationwide program was started with the objective of enhancing the growth and development of India's entrepreneurial economy.

Airports set to have special pharma zones

The Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad international airports will soon have special infrastructure to handle export and import of medicines.

The cities will get pharmaceutical zones that will be equipped with storage and cold-chain facilities, an official in the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare said.

"The design for establishing the first three pharmaceutical zones has been prepared. Besides storage and transportation, these zones will have drug-

testing facilities to ensure quality," Dr. Surinder Singh, the Drug Controller-General of India, said.

According to the Health Ministry, the infrastructure at the three airports will be ready by the end of 2009. Each zone will have a good manufacturing practice-compliant center and facilities to test materials during transit in controlled conditions. "There will be separate facilities for export, import, sampling and for vaccines," he added.

According to Dr. Singh, the investments would come from the airports.

More US food chains seek to enter India

Unperturbed by the economic slowdown, the US-based ice-cream maker Snowberry USA Inc. and pizza chain Famous Famiglia are all set to enter India.

"We will open our first outlet in about a year and will rely exclusively on our channel partners to expand in the country," co-founder and executive vice-president of Famous Famiglia, Giorgio Kolaj, said.

"The chain will be opening its first outlet at the Bangalore airport, and will be targeting locations like airports and major metros in the first phase of the

entry," he said. On the other hand, Snowberry is entering the \$200-million Indian ice-cream market with a planned investment of \$50 million.

The company, famous for its low-fat yogurt ice-cream has formed an Indian entity, Snowberry India Ltd. to carry out its Indian operations.

The investment will be made in a phased manner by 2010, said Snowberry USA president Robert F. Barker.

Snowberry officials said that the company will set up 50 stores in its first phase of expansion.

Punj Llyod ties up with US firm to form JV in N-fuel technology



Thorium Power, a US-based nuclear energy company, has signed an agreement with Punj Llyod, one of India's leading engineering and

construction companies, to form a joint venture (JV).

The JV will provide thorium fuel technology for light water reactors (LWR) to come up in India, which predominantly generates nuclear power using LWRs.

The agreement for the equal-stake joint venture company will be signed in the first half of calendar year 2009.

"The joint venture will work on providing thorium fuel technology for nuclear reactors, advisory services for nuclear power plants and establishing a nuclear technology investment fund in India," said Seth Grae, president and chief executive officer of Thorium Power.

Under its three-stage nuclear power program, India has committed to develop a thorium fuel cycle for its planned 12 indigenously-developed nuclear reactors.

While India has only 0.8 percent of the world's uranium reserves, it has about 32 percent of the world's total reserves of thorium.

'India may exceed 2020 nuclear power target'

India is expected to exceed the nuclear power target of 20,000 MW by 2020, thanks to the removal of curbs on the import of technology and fuels by the international community, says a top scientist in India's nuclear establishment.

"We can well exceed the 2020 target," said Dr. Anil Kakodkar, Chairman of India's Atomic Energy Commission. The country's first fast-breeder reactor was under construction and on schedule for commissioning in 2010-11, Dr. Kakodkar said, adding that the India's nuclear power program would, thereafter, see sustained and committed activity.

Dr. Kakodkar also said that India was currently in talks with several foreign vendors in this area and felt that in a year or so the full program would start rolling.

A crucial guarantee India was seeking from vendors was uninterrupted and lifetime supply of fuel and the right to re-process spent fuel, necessary to deliver a sustained growth of 8 percent till 2031.

Zee News ties up with VOA

Zee News has tied up with Voice of America (VOA), one of the biggest public broadcasters in the United States.

According to the company, VOA is expected to give Zee an advantage over its competitors by providing it unprecedented access to the American market.

The alliance will help Zee in featuring stories of Indian interest from all across America.

Zee News will air a five-minute daily segment named 'America Live', which will be a part of the 8 am news bulletin. In addition, Zee News will also telecast relevant stories in the afternoon (2 pm) and a prime time news bulletin 'News Top 10'.

Satyam partners with K2

Satyam Computer Services Ltd. the global consulting and information technology services provider, has entered into a partnership with the US-based software maker K2 to provide business process management (BPM) solutions.

K2 delivers BPM solutions on its Blackpearl and Blackpoint software.

Satyam will develop a center of excellence in Chennai in 2009 to support the delivery of K2 based solutions. The Hyderabad-based company provides consulting, system integration and outsourcing solutions globally.

K2 is a division of SourceCode Technology Holdings based in Washington.

Kohinoor Foods ties up with US firm Target Corp

Kohinoor Foods, a leading ready-to-eat food product manufacturer, has tied up with a US-based retail chain, Target Corporation, for marketing authentic Indian food products in America.

"The aim behind joining hands with a leading chain like Target Corporation is to serve the increasing demand of authentic Indian food in the United States," Kohinoor Foods joint managing director Gurnam Arora said.

The Target Corp, which operates approximately 1,500 stores in 47 U.S. states, will source and sell over 16 different authentic Indian delicacies of Kohinoor Foods, he said.

From a diverse range of products, initially, Target plans to take forward four selected categories — cook-in sauces, microwave rice, microwave meal and meal kit, he said.

Various products like tikka masala,



Goan vindaloo, coconut curry, saffron rice, vegetable biryani and roganjosh will be sold at Target's exclusive outlets in the United States, he added.

Kohinoor Foods, which is also known for its branded basmati rice, has a plant capable of producing over 120,000 meals per day.

GE wants to revolutionize rural healthcare in India

GE Healthcare (GEHC), an arm of US-based General Electric, plans to revolutionize rural health services in countries like India and Bangladesh "the same way as cell phones did", a senior company executive said on December 5.



GE Healthcare

In India, GEHC is working with the Neonatal Intensive Care and Emergencies (NICE) in Andhra Pradesh, and the Manipal Medical Institute in Karnataka on cardiac care, but it wants to invest specialised focus on maternal health, Omar Ishrak, president and CEO of GEHC Clinical Systems, said.

"GE wanted to enter into rural healthcare in a big way and revolutionize it the same way as mobile phones did. We have embarked on several programs in Bangladesh and India, especially on maternal care," he said at the 94th Radiological Society of North

America (RSNA-2008) meet, which ended in Chicago on December 5.

In Bangladesh, GEHC is also taking help of the microfinancing program of Nobel Laureate Mohammad Yunus and his Grameen Bank. "If we succeed in the maternal care in Grameen health program, we can translate that to cardiac care and other ailments," he said.

Health experts from across the world opined at the conference that investing in education and empowering the rural population with information about healthcare would go a long way in solving the challenges in rural healthcare.

Rural healthcare was a big challenge in most Asian countries and, besides accessibility, it was the lack of affordability and information which had made the delivery of healthcare more difficult in these countries, the experts said.

US-based Broadridge Financial to tap Indian securities market

US-based Broadridge Financial Solutions, an outsourcing provider to the global finance industry, is planning to foray into the Indian market soon. The \$2.2-billion company is in talks with stock brokerages and banks to market its securities processing products to bolster revenues. It expects to garner around \$7 million from India in 2009.

"This is part of our strategy to increase revenues from emerging markets like India and China. These markets are on their way to maturity, and we expect to cash in on the opportunity," said V. Laxmikanth, managing

director of Broadridge Financial Solutions (India).

The company estimates the market for its securities processing product at around \$70-100 million in the country. "Initially, we plan to tap our existing global clients, which have subsidiaries or offices in India. The aim is to have a first-mover advantage in the Indian market," he said.

The company's product helps clients, including stock brokerages, investment banks and mutual funds, to manage risk associated with cross-border investments. "The software will offer them a global risk profile thereby

helping them make informed decisions. In the wake of the global financial crisis, we expect new regulations and more collaboration between governments. Our product also offers easy regulatory compliance and helps scale up back-end processing," he said.

But he also admitted that the company would have to do some effective lobbying with the Government to market this kind of a product. "We have already started our process and our present facility in Hyderabad provides us proximity to the market, besides helping customizing the market," he said.

Mukesh Ambani named among world's top chemical kings



Indian billionaire businessman Mukesh Ambani, who heads the country's most valued corporate group, has been ranked

sixth among the world's 40 most-powerful faces in the chemical industry.

In a list compiled by international chemical business information provider ICIS, Ambani has moved up four positions in the 2008 list, topped by German chemical major BASF's chairman and CEO Jurgen Hambrecht.

Ambani is the only Indian on the ICIS Top 40 Power Players list for 2008, where he follows Dow Chemical's Andrew Liveris (second), Saudi Arabian firm Sabc's CEO Mohamed Al-Mady (third), Kuwait's Petrochemical Industries Co's CMD, Maha Mulla Hussain (fourth), and China's Sinopec chairman, Su Shulin (fifth).

According to the report in the weekly magazine *ICIS Chemical Business*, under Ambani's leadership, "Reliance Industries continues to dominate the Indian petrochemical scene and to push forward with diversification and globalization plans."

In the report, ICIS stated that these people have changed the face of global chemical industry through mergers and acquisitions, policy leadership, innovation or financial performance.

WB to lend \$14 billion to India for Infra projects

The World Bank has said that it will provide \$14 billion to India over the next three years to facilitate infrastructure development projects and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The World Bank Group's new Country Strategy for India, discussed by the institution's board, envisages a total proposed lending program of \$14 billion for the next three years, the World Bank said in a statement.

Part of the loan would be spent in the seven low-income states — Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh — to support poverty reduction programs. The new strategy will also support some "middle-income states" (as per global standards) like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab,

Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

However, the Bank will closely scrutinize these developmental projects. "The World Bank and the Government will jointly implement a more rigorous project selection process than in the past," World Bank acting Country Director for India, Rachid Benmessaouds, said.

India had borrowed \$2.7 billion to fund nine projects in several sectors, including infrastructure, education, health and rural development.

Meanwhile, the World Bank has agreed to help India with \$3 billion of additional investment.

The development institution has provisioned this additional amount as part of the total financing envelope of \$14 billion proposed in the India Country Strategy over 2009-2011.

Government promises electricity for all by 2012

The Government of India plans to provide electricity for all by 2012, Power Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde told reporters in New Delhi. "So far, 53,000 villages have been electrified and by 2012 everyone will get electricity."

Under the Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojna (RGGVY), launched in 2005, the Ministry of Power has set a target to electrify 120,000 villages in the current Five Year Plan (2007-12). The Rural Electrification Corporation is the nodal agency for the implementation of RGGVY.

Under this scheme, the Government provides 90 percent subsidy for electricity distribution infrastructure and 100 percent subsidy for providing power connections to rural households. The Government has already provided electricity connections to 1.8 million below-the-poverty-line (BPL) households. The target for this fiscal is 5 million households.



Leo Burnett India is Burnett's Global Agency of the Year



Leo Burnett India has been chosen as the Global Agency of the Year 2008 — top among the Leo Burnett network's 94 offices in 86 countries.

In an official communiqué, Mark Tutsell, chief creative officer, Leo Burnett Worldwide, says, "Leo Burnett India stepped onto the world's stage in 2008, leaving Cannes with more Lions than any other office in our network. Now, they have cleaned up again, winning three coveted awards hosted by our network: the Gold Pencil, the Bright Star and the Global Agency of the Year award."

India was chosen as the best global agency out of the Burnett network's five Bright Stars. The other four Bright Stars were Argentina, Brazil, Italy and

Japan. These Bright Stars, in a sense, were on the shortlist for the Agency of the Year title.

A Bright Star status is arrived at after evaluating the reputation of an agency in its region and worldwide, the profits it makes, employee satisfaction scores, interactions with fellow industry members at various forums, creative work and awards won.

"So, the network takes a holistic view, after which the judging happens," Nitish Mukherjee, managing director, Leo Burnett India, said.

In order to be considered a Bright Star, each market must have met its financial and business goals and delivered creative breakthroughs. This year, as a network, Leo Burnett had also climbed up the ranks in the Gunn Report, from No. 6 to No. 2.

The India office won the network's much coveted Gold Pencil for outstanding achievement in creativity across traditional and non-traditional media for Luxor Highlighters. This is the first time that the Indian arm of Leo Burnett has won this creative accolade. 

Retail sector to grow to \$590 bn in four years

The unorganized retail sector in India is expected to grow at about 10 percent per annum to reach \$496 billion in 2011-12 despite the steady expansion of organized retailers, a study released on December 17 said. The report on the impact of organized retail on small shop owners, released in Parliament by the Delhi-based think-tank Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), said that the retail business in the country would grow at 13 percent annually from \$322 billion in 2006-07 to \$590 billion in 2011-12.

However, given the relatively weak financial state of the unorganized retailers and the space constraints on their expansion prospects, this sector alone will not be able to meet the growing demand, the report said.

Hence, the organized retail that now constitutes a small four percent of the total industry is likely to grow at a much faster pace of 45-50 percent per annum and quadruple its share in total retail trade to 16 percent by 2011-12, ICRIER said.

13

'Entrepreneurship can meet India's inclusive growth target'


The Indian entrepreneurial community indicates an average level of conduciveness at 3.31 on a scale of one to five (1 being poor and 5 being excellent) for entrepreneurial ventures in the country. As the markets evolve and adjust to new realities, several opportunities are likely to emerge for the entrepreneur to start and grow businesses in India. This was stated in the perception survey released jointly by KPMG and TiE, titled 'Entrepreneurial India', during the TiE Entrepreneurial Summit 2008 in Bangalore on December 16.

Over 1,000 entrepreneurs across 15 Indian states were evaluated to gauge their perception of the ecosystem in their respective states. For the purpose of the study, the ecosystem was evalu-

ated on parameters such as infrastructure, finance, manpower, local environment and ecosystem, regulation and governance. Finance, closely followed by infrastructure, with manpower marginally behind, emerged as the three most important factors considered for fostering entrepreneurial growth.

Although, the respondents wanted improvement in infrastructure, it seems that they have acknowledged the Government's efforts towards infrastructure development, and are optimistic about its impending transformation. However, despite a surge in the number of venture capitalists and private equity money available in India, there seems to be a gap in the demand for and supply of funds for entrepre-

neurial ventures. New banking initiatives towards funding start-ups and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) were also perceived as deficient due to several procedural issues and high collateral requirements.

The 'Entrepreneurial India' survey also presents a state-level confidence index. The survey did not attempt to seek the views of entrepreneurs on each of the 15 states, but was restricted to their home state only. Andhra Pradesh, known for its IT services sector has the highest confidence score of 4.14 positioning it much above the national average of 3.31. Following Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Punjab lead the pack with scores higher than the national average. 

Indian-American develops imaging system to track moods

We might never know what evil lurks in the hearts of humans, but Prabir Bhattacharya's computers might.

The Indian-American scientist at Concordia University is developing a computer image processing system that detects and classifies facial expressions.

The system aims at taking and analyzing photos of individuals, potentially in areas of high traffic where security is a primary concern, such as an airport.

If one could take random photos of the crowd and process them fast



Prabir Bhattacharya

enough, there is the potential to identify those individuals who might be problematic, including terrorists.

Facial expressions do not actually involve the entire face, but rather specific sets of muscles near the eyes, nose and mouth, according to a Concordia release.

Bhattacharya's system measures 15 key points on the face and then compares these measures against images of identifiable facial expressions. Although there is great variety in facial expressions, seven basic expressions seem to be relatively universal.

Co-Founder of Nair & Co. wins Bharat Samman



Dr. Shan Nair

Dr. Shan Nair, Co-founder of Nair & Co., a leading global integrated solution provider helping companies expand internationally, has won the 2008 'Bharat Samman', which will be presented to 20

prominent Indian expatriates.

"I am truly grateful for this honor. It's a proud moment to be recognized for the Bharat Samman Award. I share this with all the people who've worked with me and are still working to take Nair & Co. to new heights," Nair said.

Founded by the NRI Institute, a global non-profit, the 'Bharat Samman' annual awards recognize the economic and philanthropic achievements of the Indian Diaspora. The awards, now in their 20th year, are being presented in New Delhi as part of a three-day gala that begins January 9, 2009.

The award ceremony night, on January 10, will be held at the New Delhi's India Habitat Centre.

Indian-origin youth begin 'Know India' trip

As many as 34 foreign youths of Indian origin on December 22 embarked on a three-week journey to see and understand the development and achievements of India and also come close to the land of their ancestors. These Diaspora youth, in the age group of 18-26, are drawn from 13 countries, including the U.S. and constitute students and professionals.

The youth have come to India under the 10th Know India Programme (KIP) of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. All expenditure except a one-way fare is borne by the Government.

The first leg of the program has begun in Delhi with a visit by the youngsters to historic monuments. They had an interaction with the Chief Election Commissioner and received a presentation from the Confederation of Indian Industry on India's trade, economy and industry. They will go around leading industries, healthcare institutions, and yoga and meditation centres in the capital.

The youth will also interact with Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi.

Kluge Prize for Indian historian Romila Thapar

Noted Indian historian Romila Thapar and Irish historian Peter Robert Lamont Brown have been presented a shared \$1 million 2008 Kluge Prize for lifetime achievement in the study of humanity.

The two were presented the prestigious award at a ceremony in the Great Hall of the U.S. Library of Congress' Thomas Jefferson Building in Washington on December 11. They are the sixth and seventh recipients since the Prize's 2003 inception.

Endowed by Library of Congress



Romila Thapar

benefactor John W. Kluge, the Kluge Prize rewards lifetime achievement in a wide range of disciplines including history, philosophy, politics, anthropology, sociology, and religion, criticism in the arts and humanities, and linguistics.

Accepting the award, Thapar, 77 stressed the importance of the humanities. "In redefining civilization and reconsidering identities, whether of the past or the present, a turn to the human sciences is imperative," she said.

Now, for software to tag 'suspicious' people

An Indian American is helping develop a surveillance software that will tell whether a person on the street is acting suspiciously or appears to be lost.

Intelligent video cameras, large video screens and geo-referencing software are among the technologies that will soon be available to law enforcement and security agencies. "We've always tried to develop technologies that would improve officers' situational awareness, and now we want to give that same kind of awareness to computers," said James W. Davis, an associate

professor of computer science and engineering at Ohio State University.

Davis and doctoral student Karthik Sankaranarayanan said that they have completed the first three phases of the project: they have one software algorithm that creates a wide-angle video panorama of a street scene, another that maps the panorama on to a high-resolution aerial image of the scene, and a method for actively tracking a selected target. The software takes snapshots from every direction within a camera's field of view and combines them.

PM calls for private investment in science research

P rime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has asked the private sector to spend more on scientific research and development (R&D). He stressed that only 112 out of every million Indians are involved in scientific research.

“At present, barely one-fourth of R&D expenditure in our country comes from the private sector. The private sector has also to play its due role,” Dr. Singh said in New Delhi on December 13, after launching a scholarship scheme to attract students to pursue science as a career.

“Within industrial R&D expenditure, nearly 40 percent comes from one sector alone — drugs and pharmaceuticals. It will be difficult to sustain the competitiveness of our diversified industrial base unless these figures



show considerable improvement in the years to come,” he remarked.

The Prime Minister said an “integrated and efficient knowledge chain should build strong synergies between

our industrial and research establishments both in the public and the private sectors”.

He said the number of full-time equivalent professionals in the R&D sector in India “per million of population is about 112. The corresponding figure for other major countries is many times higher”.

Dr. Singh, however, said that the United Progressive Alliance government had made “very significant investments in upgrading our education infrastructure to cope with this projected demand”.

“But clearly much more needs to be done and will be done.”

The Prime Minister said that his Government was also looking at innovative ways of multiplying the reach of education infrastructure.

New Brahmos variant hits target

D RDO successfully test-fired the new variant of BrahMos missile in vertical-launch configuration from an Indian Navy ship in the Bay of Bengal on December 18.



The test was carried out from a moving Rajdoot class warship. The vertical launcher, used in the test, has been designed and developed by the Indo-Russian joint venture BrahMos Corporation. The test has proved and demonstrated the new universal vertical launcher designed and developed by the corporation. The BrahMos flight test met all mission objectives.

Defence Minister A. K. Antony congratulated Dr. A. S. Sivathanu Pillai, Distinguished Scientist and Chief Controller, R&D and CEO & MD, BrahMos Aerospace, on the successful vertical launch of the supersonic cruise missile.

The launch will give a boost to the program of installing the missile on board warships. The IAF is also carrying out structural modifications on the Su-30MKI to develop an air-launched version of the missile. Attempts at integrating the missile in submarines are also on in Russia.

LCA high-altitude trials at Leh successful: DRDO



D RDO's indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) achieved a major milestone when two of its prototypes landed at Leh Air Base in the high-altitude Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir.

The prototype vehicle (PV-3) landed at Leh on December 13 at 1.26 P.M. The Leh airfield in Ladakh region, situated at an altitude of 10,600 ft, is one of the highest airfields in the world with temperature ranging from plus 5 to minus 20 degree Celsius. The aircraft were soaked overnight in cold weather, and powered up next day for operation. The objective of the current phase of flight trials was to expose the onboard systems to the extreme low temperatures.

Two Tejas prototypes, PV-3 and LSP-2, were involved in this important environmental test. LSP-2, powered by the latest IN20 engine with Full Authority Digital Engine Control (FADEC), is in the Standard of Preparation (SOP) that will be cleared for induction into service.

Third generation Nag missile test-fired

T he third generation hit-to-kill anti-tank missile, Nag, was successfully test-fired in its full configuration at the Air Force



ranges near Pokhran in Rajasthan on December 24. The trial was successful and met all mission objectives. Nag,

launched from its dedicated carrier Namica, carried a live warhead, caused extensive destruction to the stationary target, a derelict tank.

The missile covered a distance of 3.3. km to pierce the tank's armor at the precise point specified.

France launches ISRO-built commercial communication satellite

A state-of-the-art communication satellite, W2M, built by ISRO on a commercial basis in partnership with EADS-Astrium of Europe, was successfully launched on December 21 at 4.05 am Indian Standard Time (IST) by the European Ariane-5 launch vehicle. The launch took place from the Guiana Space Centre at Kourou in French Guiana.

Thirty two minutes after its lift-off, W2M separated from Ariane-5, after reaching its intended Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO). Radio signals transmitted by W2M were successfully received by ISRO's Master Control Facility (MCF) at Hassan in Karnataka and the satellite's health is normal.

The W2M project was undertaken in the context of an accord signed during the visit of the President of France on February 20, 2006, in New Delhi between Antrix Corporation Ltd., the commercial arm of the India's Department of Space, and EADS Astrium to jointly build and deliver a communication satellite to Eutelsat Communications, Paris.

Astrium had the responsibility for



overall program management and delivery of the communications payload and Antrix/ISRO provided the satellite bus and also performed W2M's integration and testing at ISRO's facilities in Bangalore. The W2M satellite, weighing 3,463 kg at lift-off, is the heaviest satellite built by ISRO and is capable of operating for over 15 years. The satellite's solar panels generate a maximum of about 7,000 watts of power.

W2M is to be positioned finally at the orbital slot of 16 degree East in the geostationary orbit. It carries 32 high power Ku band transponders for telecommunications and broadcasting services over Europe, Middle East and North Africa.

New variety of banana for diabetics

Scientists at the Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture and Technology (CSAUAT), Kanpur, have developed a new variety of banana with less sugar content for diabetic patients. "In the new variety, we have successfully controlled the conversion process of starch into glucose, which is a natural phenomenon in fruits containing starch (carbohydrate)," senior agro-scientist at CSAUAT Dr. G.S. Gaur said.

In the newly developed banana variety, the conversion takes at such a slow pace that there is no considerable rise in the glucose levels of diabetics eating these bananas, he explained.

The sugar content apart, all vital



ingredients of normal bananas are intact in the new variety, said the scientist. "Like its counterparts, the newly developed banana variety is rich in vitamin-B and C, phosphorus, calcium and iron," said Dr. Gaur.

Asked about the concentration of sugar content in the new banana variety, he said, "As the banana variety is still in an experimental stage, it would not be feasible to say anything on this."

It would take another six months for the variety to be released for commercial use. However, unlike 100 gram of ordinary banana, which normally has 650 calories, the same quantity of the new banana variety contains considerably fewer calories.

ISRO tests indigenous cryogenic engine

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully conducted a test of its indigenous cryogenic (supercooled fuel) engine to be used in the next Geo-Synchronous Launch Vehicle (GSLV-D3) mission, the space agency said in Bangalore on December 20.

"The flight acceptance hot test of the Cryogenic engine was carried out at the liquid propulsion systems center at Mahendragiri in Tamil Nadu on December 18. This engine will be used in the next GSLV launch in April 2009 for carrying the 2.3-tonne Geo-Stationary Experimental Satellite," ISRO said in a statement.

Stem cell banking just got bigger in India

Many Indians are waking up to the magic of stem cell banking and want to gift their unborn child a way to fight blood, genetic and immune system diseases for the rest of his or her life.

A couple of companies in India are already dealing with stem cell banking like the Chennai-based LifeCell, and Reliance Life Sciences. Stem cells from umbilical cord blood are collected at the time of delivery when the cord connecting the baby to mother is cut.

Stem cell therapy has the potential to radically change the treatment of human disease. Cord blood technology has been used in the U.S. since 1990.

India-US team finds new therapy for cancer

A team of Indian and American scientists has found a new way of treating pancreatic cancer that kills nine in 10 of some 40,000 people diagnosed with the disease in the U.S. each year.

The new personalized therapy involves targeting a receptor whose activation may be responsible for some pancreatic cancers, suggests a study by scientists at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center, Baltimore, Maryland and Institute of Bioinformatics, Bangalore.

The receptor identified by the team is called phosphorylated epidermal growth factor receptor (pEGFR). Physicians could potentially test patients for signs of pEGFR, then direct therapies at the signal pathway to shrink or prevent pancreatic tumors.

The new GREENBACK

Growing international awareness of the threat of global climate change due to increasing carbon dioxide emissions is fueling demand for carbon credits. The worldwide carbon credit market was expected to have surged by 75 percent in 2008, touching the \$100 billion-mark, after doubling the year before. According to the World Bank, the carbon market added up to \$64 billion in 2007, more than double the 2006 figure of \$31 billion. The European Union's Emission Trading Scheme (EU-ETS) also saw a doubling of both value and number of allowances transacted to the tune of \$50 billion. World Bank data shows that the global carbon market doubled or trebled in value for all segments, except for projects in developing countries, which saw a leveling-off of market volumes transacted under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), that is, from 537 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂e) in 2006 to 551 MtCO₂e in 2007.

China, India and Brazil are among the main players in carbon credits. India has emerged as the second-largest seller of carbon credits after China, with a six percent share in 2007. Indian firms earned \$300 million by selling certified emission reductions (CERs), each of which is equivalent to a ton of carbon dioxide. In just about four years, the figure is expected to jump more than ten-fold to \$3.6 billion. CERs are issued by the Executive Board of the CDM, set up under the Kyoto Protocol, after verification of emission reductions achieved by specified projects. Carbon credits are generated by firms in the developing world when they adopt cleaner technologies that result in the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For a reduction of every ton of CO₂ that is released, thanks to the adoption of cleaner technology, the company gets a CER that can be sold in exchanges across the world like any other commodity.

Most buyers of these credits are companies located in the developed economies, which are signatories to the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change. Firms from highly industrialized countries buy credits from developing countries like India as they find it difficult to switch over to cleaner technologies, or the cost of changing over is prohibitive. They can offset this by investing in projects that reduce GHG emissions in developing countries, or by buying tradable credits from companies in the developing world.

CDM projects have so far generated more than 135 million CERs, and are expected to generate more than 2.7 billion CERs in the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (up to 2012). Though the Kyoto Protocol was



negotiated in 1997, the CDM came into effect only in 2005.

GHG emissions are primarily caused by the burning of fossil fuels, including crude oil, natural gas and coal. Factors driving the value of carbon credits — it was being traded around \$40 a CER toward the end of July in 2008 — are binding emissions targets set out under the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol, and the likely adoption of a cap-and-trade system by the U.S. in 2009.

There is growing interest and funding in developing countries like China, India and Brazil in “clean projects” for setting up plants that help reduce GHG gases, churning out more CERs that can be traded in exchanges.

The venture capital community is now showing interest in funding clean-tech projects in India. In fact, in 2008, Indian companies successfully raised over \$1.5 billion abroad through bonds for green projects, mainly in the wind and solar energy segment.

Green Ventures International, a New York-based emissions commodity asset management company, launched a \$300-million Indian Carbon Fund. It aims to buy CERs from companies operating under CDM in India and sell them to European buyers. Depending on the success of this maiden fund, it may launch a billion-dollar, India-focussed carbon fund.

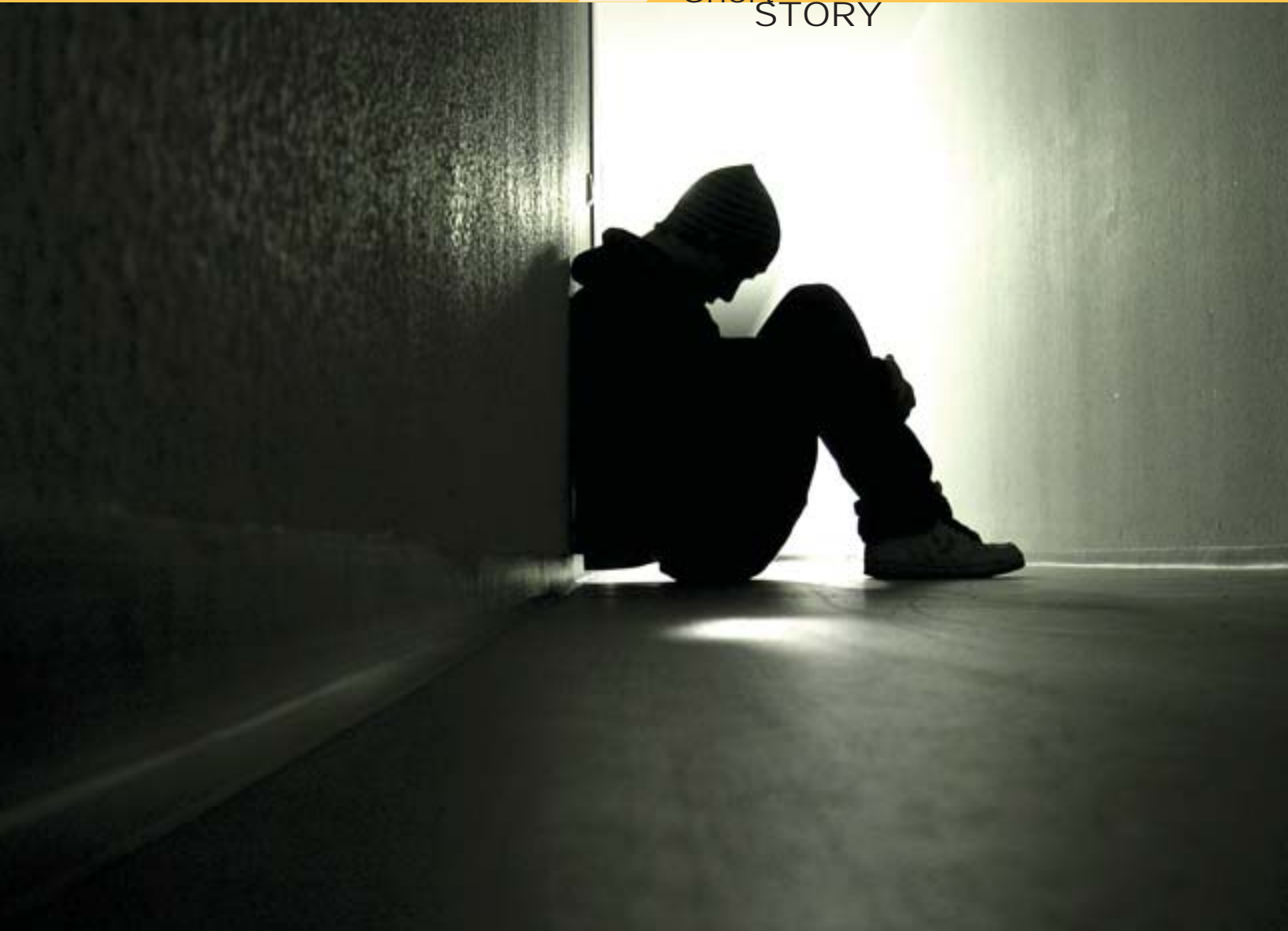
IFCI Venture Capital Funds launched an \$80-million Green India Venture Fund. It will invest in commercially viable, energy-efficient, CDM projects.

The Indian Government has also drawn up an ambitious plan to encourage industry to opt for green technologies. Last year, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh launched the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), which aims at “national growth objectives through qualitative changes in direction that enhances ecological sustainability, leading to further mitigation of greenhouse gases”.

The Government is committed to keeping India's per capita emissions below the average for the developed world at all times. India's per capita emission was 0.87 tons in 1994, and is currently estimated to be 1.1 tons. This is quite low compared to industrialized countries.

The highly-industrialized economies are expected to cut GHG emissions by an average of five percent below 1990 levels by 2012, and reduce carbon emissions by about 80 percent relative to current levels by 2050.

Large volume projects are expected to come aboard the CDM bandwagon in the future, especially in the area of energy. Large groups including the Tatas, Reliance, and the Aditya Birla Group are unveiling plans to invest in these projects.



THEIR ONLY ONE

By Jhareswar Chattopadhyay
Translated from Bangla by Tirna Ray

18

The year was 1942. The sun was slowly setting over the harbor at Freemantle. The city sighed in relief as twilight shadows stretched their cool fingers at the end of a hot, trying November day. Many of the steamships anchored in the harbor were lowering derricks and stowing away gear.

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 D. V. 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. Within the campus, on a stretch of grass, stood a big tree with clusters of red flowers. On so mild a night, it slumbered, its leaves drooping.

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

Paramesh asked softly, "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 — warm and sad — soaked his chest. The appeal was poignant, but there was no passion in the embrace. A dying fire, a moving submission.

Paramesh's entire 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

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.

..." 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 raindrops on cheeks and hands.

From the staircase she called out to Paramesh, "Can you come up?"

Towel and pyjama 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 spread eagled 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 woollen 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. "Vishweshvaraiyajji 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: Industrialize! Or else, a country with crores 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 road piggybacked on a reddish-pebbled way. 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. "Aich." The conductor mashed the word between tongue and palate. The bus moved on, towards the city.

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 something 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



The sky, framed by the bus window. Nirmala looked at the floating clouds and said, "It might rain." The road piggybacked on a reddish-pebbled way. 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. "Aich." The conductor mashed the word between tongue and palate.

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 ...

Nirmala and Paramesh wiped their shoes on the thick rubber mats. Just as they wanted to wipe so many things from off their minds.

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."

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 shoulders. 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 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 number eight,” 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 bur-nished bench with a backrest, stuffed with foam. The day’s dailies, *Deccan Herald*, *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *Pragyabani* in Kannada were strewn over the centre 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.

It was 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 Maths or Physics honours,” he said.

“What else.”

All well-rehearsed, rationalized responses were thanks to relatives and well-wishers who had lent them their best over the last few months.

The train whistled and jerked to a start. A blaring announcement: The Brindaban Express is leaving from platform number one.

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. The train crossed a couple of stations. The modern houses, changing skyline, green landscapes and the irregular contours of the far away hills gradually gave way to an illusory calm. 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, understated human touch in a tech-savvy world. He began to narrate those stories, the psalms of this new-found 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.

Rahman wins Satellite Award for 'Slumdog Millionaire' music

Noted Indian music director A. R. Rahman has added a Satellite Award to his Golden Globe nomination for Best Original Score for his music in British director Danny Boyle's uplifting underdog tale 'Slumdog Millionaire'.

Apart from Rahman's award, the Mumbai set and shot film has won two more annual Satellite Awards given by the International Press Academy for Best Picture-Drama and Best Director for Boyle.

The film tells the heartwarming story of an 18-year-old orphan from the slums of Mumbai who goes on to win a staggering \$420,000 on India's 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?' game show.



'Slumdog Millionaire' has also tied with 'WALL.E', a computer-animated-science fiction-romance film, for the Best Picture award from the Boston Society of Film Critics, besides winning the Best Editing prize.

Named as one of the Top 10 films of 2008 by *Associated Press* movie writer David Germain, ranking at number four, 'Slumdog Millionaire' has also won four EDA (Excellent Dynamic Activism) Awards from the Alliance of Women Film Journalists (AWFJ),

including Best Film and Best Direction.

The awards are named in honor of AWFJ founder Jennifer Merin's mother, Eda Reiss Merin, a stage, film and television actress whose career spanned more than 60 years.

The film has also earned three other nominations for Best Picture-Drama, Best Director for Boyle and Best Screenplay for Simon Beaufoy in the 2008 Golden Globe Awards given by Hollywood Foreign Press Association. Earlier, the film won two awards from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association — Best Director for Boyle and Best Music for Rahman. It also won the runner-up prize for Best Cinematography for Anthony Dod Mantle.

Indian model is new brand ambassador of Maybelline



Diana Penty

Indian model Diana Penty has replaced Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone as the new face of international cosmetics brand Maybelline New York. With this, she joins the ranks of international

supermodels like Adriana Lima and Christy Turlington.

"I feel great to get this opportunity to endorse a brand that is so vibrant and truly multi-ethnic. For me, it is not only about whom I am replacing but it's about being on the same platform as international models and get international exposure," Penty said in a statement released in New Delhi on December 1.

Penty is a part of the Elite Model Management Agency and its CEO Sushma Puri was all praise for the young model.

"Diana has a face that is very versatile and appeals to both Indian and international markets and she is also young, beautiful and confident. This makes her the ideal choice for any international brand," Puri said.

Padukone was named the brand ambassador of Maybelline in June 2007.

Shahid impresses American choreographer

American choreographer James Martin Kudelka who has been roped in Ken Ghosh's next to instruct Shahid Kapoor with some international dance moves can't stop raving the actor for his ability to perform.

Best known for his work with high-profile pop musicians such as Justin Timberlake, Janet Jackson, Pink and boy band N'Sync, Kudelka is thoroughly impressed with Shahid's ability to pick up things fast.

"Marty (as he is fondly called) thinks Shahid is a fantastic dancer and a fast



learner. He thinks that Shahid is incredibly focused and enthusiastic about his work and one of few good dancers he has come across," said a source from the production house.

The source added: "He likes the fact that not only is Shahid a quick learner but also that he has left no stone unturned to get into Justin's super flexible moves. Everyone on the set was mesmerized after watching his moves. They can't stop talking about him thanks to Marty."

Warner Bros. India signs three-movie deal



Se Aayi Hai', 'Chandbhai' and 'Basra'.

Having entered the Hindi film industry with the movie 'Chandni Chowk to China', media and entertainment giant Warner Bros. Pictures India is increasing its presence in the country through a three-movie deal with People Tree Films, headed by producer Mukesh Talreja and director Nikhil Advani.

Blaise Fernandes, Warner Bros. country head, December 8 said in a press statement that the deal would cover co-production and distribution of the three movies — 'Jaane Kahaan

Warner Bros. co-produced the action comedy 'Chandni Chowk to China' with Talreja, Ramesh Sippy and Rohan Sippy. Starring Akshay Kumar and Deepika Padukone, the film, directed by Advani, is due for release on January 16.

KEYLONG: Oasis in a cold desert



23

Once while visiting Keylong in Himachal Pradesh, Rudyard Kipling, the renowned author and novelist, had said: "Surely, God lives here, this is no place for men." And rightly said so. Keylong, the exciting, mountainous and delightful region at the foothills of the mighty Himalayas is indeed an oasis in a cold desert.

The route to Lahaul takes a traveler over Rohtang Pass (3,980 m), Koksar Sissu, Gondla and crossing the river Chandra Bhaga at Tandi. During winter, Keylong is literally isolated from the world due to heavy snowfall. The scenic spot is located along the equally scintillating Manali-Leh road, at the intersection of the Chandra Valley, the Bhaga Valley and the Chenab Valley. Sights near Keylong include the Kardang, Shasur and Tayul monasteries, as well as the Hindu Guru Ghantal temple.

WHAT TO SEE

Tandi: The hamlet of Tandi is locat-

ed at the confluence of the Chandra and Bhaga rivers, which merge to form the Chandra-Bhaga or Chenab river. The roads from Tandi lead to Keylong, Udaipur and Koksar. There are many villages near Tandi which offer excellent opportunities for learning about the unique cultural setting of the Lahaul Valley.

Udaipur: Fifty-three kilometers from Keylong, Udaipur is the home of the Mrikula Devi Temple, famous for its woodcarvings. This sub-divisional headquarters is situated at the junction of the Mayar nullah with the main river Chandra Bhaga. Earlier, the village was known as Margul or Markul. Around 1695, it was renamed Udaipur, when king Udai Singh of Chamba (1690-1728) raised it to the status of a district centre in the Chamba-Lahaul region.

Triloknath: Both Hindus and Buddhists have revered the famous Triloknath shrine for centuries. This is primarily a Buddhist place of worship, situated on the left bank of the Chenab river, high above the bed. A good

branch road from the Tandi-Udaipur road leads to Triloknath. Prayer flags that seem to always flutter in the cold mountain wind adorn the approach to the shrine. The massive structure has been raised in traditional Lahauli style using stones and timber.

Jispa: This beautiful spot is 22 km away from Keylong and 4 km ahead of Ghemur. The village is situated at the junction of two nullahs with the main river Bhaga. Jispa has a very large dry river-bed, a rarity in Lahaul. Just on the edge of the river Bhaga is a small PWD rest house. Near this, the river is shallow and plenty of trout can be caught during summer. The place is virtually an angler's delight.

Gondla: Around 18 km from Keylong, this village of the Lahaul Valley has some royal heritage as its prime attraction — the eight-storeyed residence of the thakur of Gondla called the Gondla Castle. The fort was constructed in the 17th century. There is also a *gompa* in this village, which attracts a number of people.

■ MERRY CHRISTMAS



People attired in Santa Claus costumes during Christmas celebrations in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad on December 23. Christmas in India has become a pan-Indian festival that is celebrated by all communities, cutting across faiths and creeds.

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