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INDIA NEWS

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Gandhi Statue dedicated at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historical Site in Atlanta

A statue of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historical Site in Atlanta on January 24, 1998. This historical event, taking place in the course of the 50th anniversary of India's independence, was made possible by sustained and concerted efforts made by the National Federation of Indian-American Associations (NFIA), along with the enthusiastic support of the National Park Service of the U.S., especially its superintendent, Mr. Troy Lissimore.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) donated the statue, which was sculpted by Mr. Ram Sutar of New Delhi.

The former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Mr. Andrew Young, was the chief guest and among the dignitaries who attended the ceremony were: Honorable Lewis Massey, Secretary of State, Georgia; Ms. Paula Bevington, Chairperson, Georgia Human Relations Commission; Mr. Issac Farris, Chief Operating Officer, The King Center; Honorable Greg Pridgeon, Former City Council member, Atlanta; and Mr. Naresh Chandra, Ambassador of India to the United States. Ms. Christina Farris, Director of the King Center, represented the King family.

Addressing the gathering, Ambassador Naresh Chandra said, "I feel great pride in participating today at this dedication ceremony to honor one of India's greatest sons and in the vicinity of the Memorial of one who was among America's greatest, namely, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. This is as it should be because both these great souls in their actions and influence succeeded in transcending the barriers that we tend so often to create to divide ourselves." The Ambassador also pointed out that both Gandhi and King believed in active reform to eradicate from society the ills of injustice and discrimination, but at the same time pursued dynamic programs of change through peaceful and non-violent means.

Ambassador Naresh Chandra read a message from President of India, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, that said, "Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Martin Luther King have been joined together by invisible arcs of history. Practitioners of non-violence, both, they believed that disobeying oppression and discrimination was their duty." The President's message referred to the dedication of the statue as the event of considerable symbolic significance

— as it symbolized: "the ennobling bonds between our two countries and commemorates the unity of thought and action of two of the greatest men of this century."

The Chairman of the NFIA, Mr. Subash Razdan, thanked the ICCR and all others who had been involved in this effort.

In her message Mrs. Coretta Scott King stated that, "It is gratifying and appropriate that this statue is installed in this historic site because my husband, Martin Luther King, Jr., was deeply and profoundly influenced by the life and teachings of Gandhi. As Martin wrote in his first book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, "As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi, my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time its potency in the arena of social reform...." Her message adds that, "It not only commemorates the life and contributions of one of history's greatest leaders, but also the eternal bond between Gandhi and his foremost American disciple, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the spirit of goodwill between the people of India and the United States."

Economy grew by 7.5% in 1996-97

The economy grew 7.5 per cent in 1996-97, propped by a phenomenal 8.2 per cent growth in agriculture, according to latest official estimates. The Central Statistical Organisations (CSO) had estimated in July that the economy may have grown 6.8 per cent in 1996-97 over the previous year. Agriculture growth was put at 5.7 per cent.

However, quick estimates released by CSO show the performance was better than estimated earlier. The output and growth estimates are at 1980-81 prices. The economy registered a growth of 7.2 per cent in 1995-96. Manufacturing had performed particularly well, growing by 14 per cent.

In comparison, the performance of the manufacturing sector was dismal in 1996-97, with a growth of only 7.4 per cent. Mining and quarrying performed poorly in 1996-97, with output declining by 0.3 per cent over the previous year. The savings rates in the economy went up to 26.1 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) from 25.3 per cent in 1995-96. This was largely because households and the corporate sector saved more and made up for a 1.9 per cent fall in public sector savings.

The electricity, gas and water supply sector slowed down in 1996-97, with growth falling to 5 per cent

from 7.3 per cent in the previous year. Growth in construction also dropped from 9.7 per cent in 1995-96 to 5.2 per cent in 1996-97.

There was also a sharp drop in the trade, hotels and restaurant sector. From a growth of 15.4 per cent in 1995-96, it slowed to 8.4 per cent in 1996-97. The CSO estimates show that growth of financing, insurance, real estate and business services dropped marginally to 8.7 per cent from 9.7 per cent in 1995-96. There was a slight improvement in community, social and personal services, from 6 per cent in 1995-96 to 6.4 per cent in 1996-97.

The growth in agriculture was significant in 1996-97 since the previous year was a bad one. While CSO had earlier estimated that agriculture, forestry and fishing dropped 0.1 per cent in 1995-96, revised estimates show that it may have fallen 3 per cent that year.

In contrast, the performance in 1996-97 was impressive, with wheat output growing 10 percent, coarse cereals 16 per cent, pulses 10 per cent, oilseeds 12 per cent and cotton 9 percent.

Per capita income went up 5.9 per cent in 1996-97. The GDP in 1996-97 was estimated at Rs. 2968.45 billion at constant prices against Rs. 2761.32 billion in the previous year.

Garment export target for 1997-98 to be achieved

The garment export target of US \$ 5.2 billion set for the current financial year 1997-98 will be achieved, Mr. Prabhat Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, said at the inaugural function of the 20th India International Garment Fair 1998. The Cabinet Secretary Mr. T.S.R. Subramanian inaugurated the three-day Fair. Mr. Prabhat Kumar indicated that growth rate of garment exports from India had picked up in the last few months recording a positive growth during the period April-December 1997 which indicated that the declining trend witnessed earlier-up to September- had been reversed.

Dwelling on the challenges before the Indian garment industry with the phase-out of the multi-fiber arrangement (MFA), currency depreciation in Southeast Asian countries etc. Mr. Prabhat Kumar underlined the need to have a composite strategy with emphasis on technology upgradation to enable the Indian garment industry to withstand global competition. He suggested that the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) should consider setting up a National Center for Garment Technology to achieve this objective. He also proposed that a special session of the Export Promotion Board (EPB) under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary should be convened to discuss the issues and problems facing the Indian garment industry. He stressed that such initiatives were imperative in order to overcome the challenges facing the garment sector in the overseas markets, since the phase of runaway growth was clearly over. Mr. Subramanian described the garment industry as a front-runner in Indian exports, but cautioned against resting on past achievements in view of the challenges looming in the global trade scenario.

DOT clears national and international automatic roaming for cellular subscribers

The Department of Telecommunications (DOT) has permitted National and International Automatic Roaming between various cellular operators' service areas. Automatic Roaming allows a mobile subscriber to move from one service area to another while still retaining the service. In this way, a subscriber can roam seamlessly across a circle and even across national borders. The following are the technical and commercial conditions:

- Roaming will be provided by using signaling transfer capability of the new technology DOT exchanges and Signaling Connection and Control Path (SCCP) functionality of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL).
- Inter-Mobile Switching Center (MSC) leased line connectivity of different operators shall not be permitted.
- Voice path switching will be only through DOT and VSNL network.
- The licensees shall abide by the ceiling tariffs specified in the license agreement.
- The licensees shall abide by all foreign and Government of India regulations with respect to international roaming. International roaming will be provided only after obtaining all statutory clearances as per laws of the land as applicable in the country concerned.
- In addition to the normal charges, the charges for the use of DOT/VSNL resources for transmission of signaling data over the DOT/VSNL Common Channel Signaling Number 7 network as applicable from time to time, will also be payable to DOT/VSNL. Initially, permission for Automatic Roaming was given to cellular operators only between metro cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai.



Pandit Jasraj performance at the Kennedy Center on February 5, 1998, organized as a part of the 50th anniversary of India's independence by the Embassy of India.

India demands expansion of Security Council

India has demanded the inclusion of developing States among permanent members of the United Nations' Security Council "without any delay" saying the developed countries have little knowledge about the problems or agenda of the developing countries.

"The council's decisions-in effect the decisions of permanent members — are taken about developing countries. These decisions are implemented in developing countries. Their impact, and fallout when they go sour, also is felt mainly by the developing countries," India's U.N. Ambassador, Mr. Kamlesh Sharma said during the general assembly's open-ended working group discussion on the expansion of the council.

Mr. Sharma said the permanent body, in which four out of five are developed countries, takes decisions on matters of life and death affecting an array of developing countries.

"The developing world is an object, without voice in these councils, without a say in the outcome as members on equal footing," he said. Making a strong case for immediate expansion of the 15-member Council, Sharma asked: "isn't it an extraordinary situation for the world to find itself in 20 years after the process of decolonization was, we thought, almost completed?"

About the Council "broadening its horizons," Mr. Sharma said a whole new doctrine was being built up of the wider implications of security in the post-millennial world. He said socio-economic, human rights, environmental or other causes of international tension were now burning themes of the present world and demanded association of developing countries as permanent members to address these issues.

"The Council's decisions must reflect the views of the developing world. Otherwise they will be perceived as those reflecting primarily the north and this polarization will damage the organization," he said. Besides, as the security problems become more and more complex, the situation had to be corrected where the council was perceived as oscillating between hasty action and no action.

Philippines will back India entry into APEC

The Philippines has agreed to back India's plea to become a member of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation and to also meet the country's target of setting a target of \$500 million for bilateral trade, by 2000. Trade between the two countries is at \$199.47 million. For the April-October period, India's exports to the Philippines grew 61 per cent to \$166.63 million. This was agreed upon at the Fifth India-Philippines Joint Committee Meeting held in Manila. Both countries have agreed to diversify their exports in order to achieve continued growth and to this end, lists of preferred commodities of exports for both countries were exchanged. According to the commerce ministry, a major breakthrough was achieved in the supply of agriculture commodities including rice and meat with the Philippines side agreeing to consider import of rice and to allow Indian suppliers a level playing field.

The Philippines has also indicated the likelihood of reducing the tariff on gems and jewelry to zero level, which is significant in view of the fact that India had been pursuing the matter for quite long. The Philippines has also agreed to facilitate easy visit of businessmen to enable interaction among both sides. Introduction of fast track registration procedures for Indian manufacturers in the pharmaceutical sector who have registered with the United States and the European Union, would also be considered by the Philippines. This would greatly help the export of bulk drugs from India. Moreover, in the railways sector, the Philippine side is amenable to consider the proposals offered by Indian Railways technical arm, RITES, for their major projects including rehabilitation of coaches.

Prime Minister writes to the UN Secretary General on recent developments in the Gulf

Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral has written to the UN Secretary General on recent developments relating to Iraq.

This was a sequel to letters written by the Prime Minister to the President of the United States and leaders of the other permanent member states of the UN Security Council on the subject.

Prime Minister Gujral drew attention to the serious adverse effect that any disruption of peace and stability in the Gulf would have on India's economy and national welfare. He reiterated India's support for the UN resolutions relating to Iraq, while expressing in view that the use of military force against Iraq would only complicate the situation.

In his letter, Mr. Gujral has also strongly stressed that any military conflict would aggravate the enormous suffering which the people of Iraq have undergone because of the sanctions regime. In particular, the Prime Minister expressed concern for the plight of women and children who are the most adversely affected and are the main victims of malnutrition and shortage of medical supplies.

In this context, Prime Minister Gujral has expressed his appreciation to the UN Secretary General for the latter's initiative in recommending expansion of the oil-for-food program to ameliorate the acute hardships of the Iraqi people. The Prime Minister has also praised the Secretary General's plea to accord primacy to the process of diplomatic negotiations and his offer of mediation, and reiterated India's readiness to contribute to the process of bringing about a peaceful solution through diplomatic negotiations.

India-US scientists meet on Earth and Atmospheric Science

A three-day summit on earth and atmospheric science with more than 75 scientists from different Indian and American organizations was held in New Delhi on February 10-12, 1998. This is in continuation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the India and the U.S. on December 16, 1997 in Washington. Under the MOU, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the U.S. and the Department of Space and Department of Science and Technology of India agreed upon a program of cooperation in earth and atmospheric sciences to be implemented through joint scientific projects, exchange of scientists, and sharing of meteorological data.

The areas of cooperation under the MOU are development of operational techniques to predict the intensity and movement of cyclonic storms, global satellite data products utilization for understanding of monsoon circulation and land surface processes, use of the products in atmospheric and oceanic circulation models and studies related to atmospheric chemistry.

Dr. James C. Dodge of the NASA and Dr. James Purdom of the NOAA headed the 25-member American team at the workshop. The Indian team was led by Dr. R. R. Kelkar, Director General of Meteorology, India Meteorological Department (IMD). Speaking at the inaugural function, the Minister of State for Science and Technology, Prof. Y. K. Alagh, and the American Ambassador, Mr. Richard F. Celeste, recalled the long tradition of collaboration between India and the US in the various fields of science and technology. They expressed the hope that the new initiative would benefit both the countries from improved techniques of weather analysis and forecasting and in particular better utilization of satellite data in prediction of monsoon and cyclones.

Third United States-India Joint Technical Group (JTG) meeting

The Third United States/India Joint Technical Group (JTG) meeting was held in the Pentagon from 22-23 January 1998. The JTG, established in 1995 in the "Agreed Minute on Defense Relations between the United States and India," provides a forum for senior Defense officials from the two nations to discuss defense research and production activities, establishes a framework for bilateral cooperation in defense related technologies, and develops activates that may lead to substantive cooperation while monitoring progress periodically.

The third JTG meeting continued to explore five high priority areas of test and evaluation cooperation identified in the previous meeting and was followed the week of 26 January by site visits to view US test and evaluation facilities at Edward's AFB, China Lake and Pt. Mugu, all in California. Other topics discussed included humanitarian demining, non-lethal weapons technology, high altitude research, the US Foreign Comparative Test Program and the development of a Master Information Exchange Agreement.

The Indian Ambassador Naresh Chandra attended a dinner for the attendees hosted by Mr. Paul Hoepfer, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for International and Commercial Programs at the Ft. Myer Officer's Club. Tentative plans have been made to hold the next JTG in New Delhi late in 1998.

Software exports grew by 59% in 1997

Software exports from India have grown by 59 per cent in 1997 to \$1.6 billion over 1996. In rupee terms, the growth is as high as 64 per cent at Rs. 58.9 billion, according to National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM).

The association has attributed the growth to continuing rise in off-shore services, entry into new markets, year 2000 date conversion business and various steps taken by the government to promote software exports by simplifying procedures.

In a statement on Friday, NASSCOM listed the association's own efforts and initiatives for the growth and projected that during 1998 software exports would gross \$2.5 billion. According to its estimates, the software industry is poised to touch revenues of \$6.5 billion by 2000 out of which exports may be as high as \$4 billion.

French investment in India to rise with Chirac's visit

The French investment in India over the next five years could rise to "three to four billion dollars," according to Indian Ambassador to France, Mr. Ranjit Sethi. Following the visit, Mr. Sethi said, "there is a clear signal from the political leadership that the French presence in India will be enormously strengthened." France is envisaging a long-term strategic relationship with India on the firm conviction that India is going to be a major power, Mr. Sethi added. Present French direct investment in India is about \$750 million dollars. But some giant projects are being negotiated between the Tatas and the French Company Total would by themselves multiply investment significantly. The French are particularly keen to invest sophisticated technology in water and waste disposal in India.

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In a continuous process of exchange of views on bilateral matters, Mr. T. P. Sreenivasan, the Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India met with Congressmen Bob Schaffer (Republican-Colorado), Jon D. Fox (Republican-Pennsylvania), Sonny Callahan (Republican-Alabama) and Kenny C. Hulshof (Republican-Missouri) and Jim McDermott (Democrat-Washington) on January 28 & 29, 1998. On February 4, he also met with Congressmen Thomas Manton (Democrat-New York), Jim Greenwood (Republican-Pennsylvania) to exchange views on bilateral matters.

At the invitation of the Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE), Mr. T. P. Sreenivasan visited the B.S.S. Hindu Temple, New Jersey on January 18, 1998. IAFPE arranged a fruitful meeting on the occasion with the members of the Forum, Chamber of Commerce, other local political activists and a large number of community members.

Ambassador Naresh Chandra visits the U.S. Virgin Islands

The Ambassador of India to the U.S., Mr. Naresh Chandra, visited St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, from January 17 to 19, 1998, to participate in the 50th Independence Anniversary celebrations organized by the India Association of the Virgin Islands, which were coinciding with the traditional celebrations of India's Republic Day. He was accompanied by Mr. Harsh Bhasin, India's Consul General in New York.

The Ambassador called on Dr. Roy L. Schneider, Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, at Government House in Charlotte Amalie. In a very cordial exchange of views, the Governor spoke of the enormous contributions of the Indian community to trading activities in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and also invited India's small industries sector to come and invest in the Islands.

Ambassador Naresh Chandra commended the Governor for creating an environment that was conducive to tourism and trade. He also informed the Governor that he would urge future trade delegations from India to extend their visit to the Virgin Islands to examine the possibilities of trade and investment.

At a reception hosted by the India Association of the Virgin Islands, Governor Schneider paid a warm tribute to the people of India, who, he said, had created

history by achieving their independence through non-violence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. He also spoke of the inspiration that Gandhiji's teachings and political philosophy had provided to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his struggle for civil rights in the U.S. He noted that while keeping alive their rich culture and traditions, the Indian community had fully integrated into the colorful, diversified and inclusive society of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In his address, Ambassador Naresh Chandra referred to the active role played by the US in India's independence. He said that it was a well-known fact that President Roosevelt had strongly urged the British to grant early independence to India. He also spoke of the influence that Gandhiji had on Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and noted that India's independence resulted in a domino effect which led to the independence of a large number of erstwhile colonies soon afterwards. This was because the Indian freedom movement was chiefly carried forward on the strength of ideas and not through violent means. The Ambassador then recounted achievements that India had made in various fields of development in the 50 years since her independence, and the challenges that still remain to be faced.



Ambassador Naresh Chandra reading the President of India's Republic Day message at the Embassy Residence on January 25, 1998 as a part of the Republic Day celebrations.

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Programs commemorating 50th anniversary of India's independence available on Internet

Net-surfers can now get details of program being organized on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of India's independence on the Internet. At the web-site address, India-50.Org, access is available to program being organized by various Departments and Ministries of the Government of India, international initiatives and the glorious story of India's freedom struggle. Later, programs being organized by various State Governments will also be added to the list. Other attractions of the site in future will be the highlights of India's achievements in last 50 years and a visitor's gallery, showing the exhibits of National Museum, New Delhi, and National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, along with the archaeological heritage of the country.

The website has been brought on-line from the Republic Day, 26th January 1998. Presently, it is of 100-page length. There are plans to host audio and video footage as well. The site will be regularly updated by the Secretariat for Commemoration of 50th Anniversary of India's Independence.

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