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Indian Industry Representatives meet U.S. Congressmen

■ **INDIA'S UPDATED FDI POLICY SIMPLIFIES JOINT VENTURE NORMS, OPENS UP NEW AREAS FOR OVERSEAS FUNDS**

■ **INDIA UNVEILS A NEW TELECOM POLICY TO USHER IN REFORMS, CHANGE MERGER AND ACQUISITION NORMS**

■ **INDIAN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY REPORTS GOOD SALES NUMBERS FOR MARCH, DRIVEN BY A GROWING ECONOMY**

INDIAN INDUSTRY REPS MEET U.S. CONGRESSMEN



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At an event organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the India Business Forum at the Capitol Hill on March 30, representatives from over 25 top Indian companies operating in the U.S. in various sectors, including information technology, automotive industry, phar-

maceuticals, communication, and steel manufacturing, interacted with Congressmen, Senators and senior officials, both from the House and the Senate.

Ambassador Meera Shankar spoke of the two-way flow of India-U.S. trade and commercial engagements in various sectors. The Ambassador

said that representatives of the Indian business community were reaching out to the U.S. Congress with the message that the Indian industry formed one of the key constituents and stakeholders in the growing India-U.S. relationship.

As the India-U.S. Strategic Partnership grows, Indian businesses

are investing in the U.S. economy and are today generating and sustaining thousands of direct and indirect U.S. jobs.

The Ambassador said Indian businesses are committed to working closely with U.S. stakeholders, in the Congress, the Administration, and the private sector to promote broad-based and mutually beneficial bilateral trade and economic engagements.

In his remarks, Senator John Cornyn said that the relationship between the United States — the world's oldest democracy — and India — the world's largest democracy — has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years.

Trade in goods and services between the U.S. and India has grown exponentially, creating countless economic opportunities for both

The Ambassador said that representatives of the Indian business community were reaching out to the U.S. Congress with the message that the Indian industry formed one of the key stakeholders in the growing relationship between India and the United States

the countries and providing U.S. consumers access to affordable goods, he said. Representative Royce spoke not just about the investments

being made by Indian firms in the United States, but also praised the Indian development model. He also pushed for U.S. companies to invest in India as part of the 'two-way relationship'.

Senator Klobuchar from Minnesota provided a positive account of Essar Americas' \$1.3 billion greenfield investment in Minnesota which had helped save a mine from closure.

The Ambassador also released a publication titled "Indian Roots, American Soil: A Look at Indian Companies in the U.S. Economy", in the presence of Senators, Congressmen and the CII Country Director Kiran Pasricha.

The book showcases the message of creation of value and jobs by Indian companies in the United States.



Rep. Joseph Crowley speaks at the CII event on March 30, 2011 at Capitol Hill, Washington D.C., surrounded by Kiran Pasricha, Deputy Director General, CII; Dave Ryan, Head-North America, Tata Communications, and Ambassador Meera Shankar. (Photo Credit: Bala Chandran, Asian Ocean Media.)

Ambassador discusses bilateral ties with Hon'ble John A. Boehner, Speaker of the U.S. House

Ambassador Meera Shankar called on the Hon'ble John Boehner (R-Ohio), Speaker of the newly elected U.S. Congress, on March 2. The discussion focussed on the positive and strategic relationship between India and the United States. Opportunities for further cooperation in the areas of trade, economy, energy and high technology were also discussed. Speaker Boehner said that the relationship with India was important for the United States, including for the Congress.



Ambassador Meera Shankar with the Hon'ble John Boehner (R-Ohio), Speaker of the newly elected U.S. Congress, on March 2.

Meets with Congressman Buck McKeon

Ambassador Meera Shankar met Congressman Buck McKeon, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, on March 16.

Ambassador Shankar and McKeon discussed developments in India-U.S. relations, including defense exchanges, and regional and global issues of mutual interest.



Ambassador Meera Shankar with Congressman Buck McKeon, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, on March 16.

Ambassador visits California

Ambassador Meera Shankar visited California on March 23-25. During the visit, she met with the Governor of California, Jerry Brown, and the Mayor of San Francisco, Edwin M. Lee, and discussed bilateral trade,

economic and cultural cooperation.

The Ambassador also met with Senator Diane Feinstein, the Chancellor of UC Berkeley, Robert Birgineau, and the Deans of the South Asia and South East Asian faculties, former Secretary of State George

Shultz, and CEO of HP Leo Apotheker. She addressed the Indian Cultural Center at Milpitas and the USIBC at Palo Alto.

The Ambassador met with select Indian CEOs and senior officials of Indian origin of various companies.

'CARE' RECEPTION



Ambassador Meera Shankar welcoming guests at a reception hosted for members of the 'CARE' organization on the occasion of the '2011 CARE Conference & International Women's Day Celebration', at the Embassy Residence on March 8.



Ms. Helene D. Gayle, CARE President and CEO, addressing the gathering.



U.S. Congresswoman Nita Lowey addressing the gathering.



A section of the audience.

SOUTH CAROLINA FEDERATION OF REPUBLICAN WOMEN'S BRIEFING



Briefing of members of the South Carolina Federation of Republican Women on 'India-US relations' at the Embassy on March 10.

NORTH EASTERN COMMUNITY RECEPTION



Ambassador Meera Shankar addressing members of the Indian American community from the North-Eastern states of India at a reception hosted at the Embassy on March 11.



A section of the audience.



Artistes presenting a variety of cultural programs on the occasion.



COMMERCE SECRETARY PRESS MEET



Commerce Secretary Mr. Rahul Khullar addressing a press conference at the Embassy of India, Washington, D.C. on March 17. Also seen in the picture is Ambassador Meera Shankar.



A section of the audience.

CII-INDIA BUSINESS FORUM



CII-India Business Forum members with Ambassador Meera Shankar and Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. Arun K. Singh (front row, extreme right). (Photo Credit: Bala Chandran, Asian Ocean Media.)

INTERNATIONAL NEIGHBORS CLUB II BRIEFING



Ambassador Meera Shankar briefing members and spouses of the International Neighbors Club II on 'India-U.S. relations' at the Embassy Residence on March 31.



A section of the audience.

Consul-General Mukta Tomar visits Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce

Consul-General of India in Chicago Mukta Dutta Tomar met Gerald J. Roper, President, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, on March 8 to discuss how Indian and U.S. companies could take advantage of emerging business opportunities.

Consul-General Tomar discussed India's recently announced budget and said there was \$500 billion worth of investment opportunities in the field of agriculture, including warehousing and transportation, and about \$1 trillion in opportunities in infrastructure



Consul-General of India in Chicago Mukta Dutta Tomar with Gerald J. Roper, President, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, on March 8.

development in India. Roper suggested a quarterly meeting, including himself, Tomar, Chicago Sister Cities, the Chamber's Global Connections Council, and other key parties to discuss how Chicagoland could take advantage of business opportunities in India.

Roper said that he looked forward to creating future programs so that Chicagoland could benefit from business opportunities in India, and assisting interested Chamber members to expand their business efforts in India.

Fabric to Fashion India 2011

The Consulate General of India, New York, organized a two-day event on apparel promotion titled 'Fabric to Fashion India 2011', in association with the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) on March 24-25. The event included a Buyer-Seller Meet and a networking reception on March 24. Around 200 textile and apparel vendors, retailers, wholesalers, fashion designers, and mainstream and ethnic mediapersons participated in the event. A panel discussion on various aspects of the Indian apparel industry and the opportunities in India was held at FIT on March 25. In his opening remarks,

Ambassador Prabhu Dayal, Consul-General of India, New York, welcomed the guests and noted the high level of interest that Indian fashion and apparels have been generating in the United States.

He spoke of the ancient origins of Indian textiles and garments and said that India was a major supplier of textiles even before its colonization. India has regained its position and is now a world's leading exporter of textiles and apparel due to the role played by the private sector, government incentives, and innovation, he said.

Ambassador Dayal said India was recognized as a prime sourcing

destination for garments, textiles and accessories and New York had played a leading role in this process. He added that India was the world's second-largest producer of textiles and garments and the second-largest provider of employment in the country, supporting a workforce of around 7 million people.

A fusion instrumental musical program was presented by guitarist Sudeip, tabla player Nitin Mitta and violinist Raghuttam.

A short film on the Indian textile and apparel industry, highlighting India's competitive advantage and efforts undertaken by the Apparel Export Promotion Council, was played, followed by a film presentation on designer Sushma Patel.



Ambassador Prabhu Dayal, Consul-General of India, New York, welcoming guests.



A fusion instrumental musical program being presented by guitarist Sudeip, tabla player Nitin Mitta and violinist Raghuttam.

Celebration of Vishwa Hindi Divas at Consulate General of India, New York

The Consulate General of India, New York, celebrated the Vishwa Hindi Divas on March 30 at the New India House. About 150 guests, including academics, working to promote Hindi in New York and New Jersey, Hindi poets and litterateurs, representatives of the mainstream and ethnic media, and people interested in Hindi and Indian culture attended the event.

In his opening remarks, Consul-General of India, Ambassador Prabhu Dayal, laid emphasis on the need to popularize Hindi and exhorted guests to begin the process by speaking in Hindi at home. He read out the message of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh.



Ambassador Prabhu Dayal, Consul-General of India, New York, addressing guests.

The first session dwelt on the activities being undertaken by various institutions to popularize Hindi. Ashok Ojha, a noted journalist, spoke

about workshops conducted by the Vishwa Yuva Sansthan to encourage children of People of Indian Origin to learn Hindi. He also discussed activities initiated by individuals and associations in the Tri-State Area.

Ambalika Mishra spoke about the activities Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan was carrying out to propagate Hindi. Harriet Lengel and Nooriya Puri, Hindi students of the Bhavan, recited their works on the occasion. Geeta Setia and Ashok Vyas of ITV engaged the guests with their composition 'Shabd Mere Meet' — a dialogue emphasizing the importance of appropriate usage of Hindi lexicon in daily life.

The second session was dedicated to the rendition of poems of eminent Hindi poets.

CGI-HOUSTON EVENTS



Consul-General Sanjiv Arora (7th from left), Dr. Ajeet R. Singhvi, President, AAPI (8th from left), Dr. Manju Sachdev, Chair, AAPI Women Physicians' Committee (5th from right), and Dr. Arti Gupta, Host President of the event (7th from right) are seen with some of the participants on March 5.

Consul-General Sanjiv Arora was the Chief Guest at the concluding gala of the Annual Women's Conference of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) in Dallas on March 5, organized in cooperation with the Texas Indo-American Physicians Society (North East Chapter).



Congressman Ted Poe and Consul General Sanjiv Arora at the sidelines of the Annual Consular Corps Luncheon hosted by the American Jewish Committee, Houston Chapter, on March 28, 2011.

Te x a s Congressman Ted Poe, Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee, was the keynote Speaker at the Annual Consular Corps Luncheon hosted by the American Jewish Committee (AJC), Houston Chapter on March 28. On the sidelines of this event, Congressman Ted Poe and Consul-General Sanjiv Arora had a brief exchange of views on India-U.S. relations and mutual cooperation.



Consul-General Sanjiv Arora (5th from left) is seen with some members of FAU's India Task Force on March 31.

Consul-General Sanjiv Arora delivered the Florida Atlantic University (FAU) Distinguished International Visitor Lecture on "India-US Partnership: A Win-Win situation" at FAU's main campus at Boca Raton on March 31. His lecture focused on India's achievements and challenges as the world's largest democracy and the fourth largest economy on purchasing power parity terms, India-U.S. relations, major priorities of the Consulate's functioning and the Consulate's role in expanding collaborations between local universities and institutions in India.

INDIA EASES JOINT VENTURE NORMS TO DRAW FOREIGN FUNDS

India on March 31 announced an updated foreign direct investment (FDI) policy that simplifies joint venture norms and opens up new areas for overseas funds.

The updated policy allows overseas firms in existing joint ventures to operate separately in the same business segment. Earlier, they needed prior approval from their Indian partners.

“The FDI policy is part of ongoing efforts of procedure simplification and foreign direct investment rationalisation, which will go a long way in inspiring investor confidence,” Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma said.

According to the updated policy released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry, companies have now been classified into only two categories — companies owned or controlled by foreign investors, and companies owned and controlled by Indian residents.

The earlier categorization of investing companies,



operating companies, and investing-cum-operating companies has been done away with.

“The simplification of joint venture norms will send a good message to foreign investors,” said Manoj Kumar, managing partner of legal advisory firm Hammurabi and Solomon. He said the new policy would give a boost to falling foreign direct investment levels in the country.

Foreign direct investment inflows into India declined 25 percent to \$18.3 billion during

April-February period of fiscal 2010-11. Other steps announced by the Ministry include allowing conversion of non-cash items, such as import of capital goods, and pre-operative or pre-incorporation expenses (including payments of rent) to equity. Earlier only royalty, lump-sum fee and external commercial borrowings were allowed to be converted into equity.

The policy also allows overseas investments for the development and production of seeds and planting material. ■

INDIA UNVEILS NEW TELECOM POLICY

India on April 11 unveiled the broad framework of a new telecom policy which would usher in reforms, such as audit of spectrum usage, de-linking of spectrum allocation and licences, and change of merger and acquisition guidelines.

“We want regular audit and review of usage of spectrum by various agencies. We feel this is required. Which agency, whether it is going to be the CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India) or the TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India), we have not decided yet,” Communications and IT Minister Kapil Sibal said in New Delhi.

“All future licenses should be unified licenses and spectrum should be de-linked

from licenses,” he said while presenting the 100-day report on the progress of various measures announced at the beginning of the year. The Minister said that a uniform license fee across all service areas was needed, and added that the quantum of fee would be decided in due course.

Existing roll-out obligations, too, would be modified, as the Department of Telecom was finding it difficult to monitor the same, he said. The terms for renewing licenses would also be changed in the new policy.



Kapil Sibal

KEY POINTS

- Four categories of licenses to be put in place: unified licenses, class licenses, licensing through authorization, and broadcasting licenses.
- Two levels of unified licenses, at the national level and at the service area level.
- Spectrum sharing to be controlled and permitted only under certain conditions.

Companies seeking to renew their licences will have to apply 30 months before the current one expires “so that there is enough time for us to deal with the applications, enough time for the licensee also to know what he is in for”, Sibal said. The licenses will be renewed after 10 years, not 20 years.

'Indian firms create thousands of jobs in U.S.'

Indian businesses which have invested widely in the American economy in diverse sectors in services and manufacturing have created thousands of jobs in the United States in recent years, according to a new study.

India-based companies have also continued to hire locally wherever they have put down roots, said the study by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), 'Indian Roots, American Soil: A Look at Indian Companies in the U.S. Economy' released on Capitol Hill on March 31.

The study was based on a survey of 35 CII-India Business Forum member companies.

"Indian businesses have invested widely in the U.S. economy in diverse sectors in the fields of services and manufacturing," Meera Shankar,

Creating jobs, saving jobs

- Since 2005, nearly two-thirds of Indian companies have added jobs to their U.S. operations
- Together, 35 companies employ over 60,000 people across 40 states
- More than four-fifths of workers at these companies are hired locally
- A majority of workers employed at these firms are U.S. citizens
- India-based companies that have operations in the U.S. have saved 2,585 jobs from being eliminated due to their acquisition of U.S. firms.

Indian Ambassador to the United States, said at the CII event highlighting the jobs and investments created by Indian companies in the U.S. "They have generated and sustained thousands of direct and indirect jobs in the U.S. economy and have contributed to the global competitiveness of U.S. companies," she said.

"This is CII's first major attempt in bringing together Indian companies with operations in the United States, as a group, to interact with members of the U.S. Congress," said CII Deputy Director General Kiran Pasricha.

"What we want to do is highlight the range and depth of the US-India business relationship," Pasricha said. "We want the Congress to appreciate the growing contributions of Indian companies to the U.S. economy and to U.S. society," she said. 

Boeing plans \$300 mn investment in Indian defense industry

US aerospace major Boeing has submitted a \$300-million plan for investment in the Indian defense industry as "offsets" for the four additional P8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft that India intends to buy for its navy, a senior company official said. The four P8Is are a follow-on order from India, which has already signed a contract with the U.S. for eight P8I platforms in maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare roles in January 2009 at a cost of \$2.1 billion.

Under the offsets (proportion of the order value to be invested in the domestic industry of the buyer) clause in the contract, Boeing will have to plough back in the Indian defense industry 30 percent of the \$1 billion that these four aircraft would cost.

"We have an indication that the (Indian) government has approved four more (P8I) and it will have offset obligation. We have given them some draft offset proposals," Christopher M. Chadwick, President of Boeing Military Aircraft, said in New Delhi. India's Defense Ministry had approved the follow-on P8I order in October 2010.

Come and see potential of India: Anil Ambani to U.S. firms

India, which along with China is one of the world's "documented growth stories", offers some of the largest opportunities for American companies, Anil Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (ADAG), one of India's most successful corporations, has said. "The opportunities for U.S. companies is vast volume markets of the world," he said, while participating



Anil Ambani

in a panel discussion on 'The Shifting Global Economy and Implications for Trade' at the U.S. Exim Bank Annual Conference in Washington on April 1.

"The challenge for U.S.

companies is to come and really see the potential of India," Ambani told America's premier forum for discussing U.S. trade policy and developing strategies to expand the role exports play in the U.S. economy.

"India and China are now documented growth stories for many decades. Their very large needs of infrastructure across all sectors is a great opportunity for U.S. exports," he added.

Ambani meets Gary Locke

Anil Ambani, ADAG Chairman, on March 31 met with U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke in Washington and discussed the value of having more U.S. medium-sized companies do business in India.

Ambani and Locke also discussed the importance of U.S. Export-Import Bank

financing. Locke spoke of the momentum in US-India economic ties generated following U.S. President Barack Obama's historic visit to India last November.

Both expressed the desire to work together to accelerate the development of the bilateral relationship.

INDIAN AUTOMOBILE SECTOR'S MARCH SALES SOAR

The Indian automobile industry on April 1 reported good sales numbers for March 2011, prompted by a growing economy, increasing disposable incomes, and low interest rates.

Indian car market leader Maruti Suzuki reported a 28.2 percent jump in total sales at 121,952 units during March this year against 95,123 units during the same period of 2010.

In March, the company's sales were driven by its best-selling compact car segment, including models like Alto, Wagon-R, Estilo, Swift, A-Star and Ritz. It saw a 43.3 percent rise in sales at 78,460 units against 54,763 units in the same period of 2010.

In the company's sedan segment, which includes cars like SX4 and Dzire, sales grew by 33.1 percent and stood at 13,910 units as against 10,453 units in March 2010.

The automobile giant has further reported a growth of 24.8 percent in sales for the complete financial year 2010-11 at 1,271,005 units as against 1,018,365 units



during the previous fiscal. The company's domestic sales in the fiscal grew by 30.1 percent with the sale of 1,132,739 vehicles as compared to the previous financial year.

India's February exports rise 49.7 percent

India's merchandise exports were up over 49 percent in February at \$23.59 billion compared to the year-ago period, and oil imports dipped marginally by 0.3 percent, latest trade data showed on April 1. Cumulative value of exports for 11 months of this fiscal was \$208.2 billion, registering a growth of 31.4 percent over \$158.49 billion logged during the like period of the previous fiscal. The country imported goods worth \$31.7 billion during February, a rise of 21.2 percent from the like month of 2010.

Cumulatively, imports were up 18 percent at \$305.29 billion for the April-February period against \$258.74 billion logged during the similar period last year. Oil imports in the month under review stood valued at \$8.21 billion, 0.3 percent lower than \$8.24 billion in the like month of the last fiscal. During the 11 months of this fiscal, these imports were 12.4 percent higher at \$88.17 billion, against \$78.14 billion.

India's mobile subscriber base touches 791.38 mn

The number of mobile subscribers in India rose to 791.38 million in February with the addition of 20.2 million connections, official data showed. According to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, the wireless user base grew 2.62 percent, from 771.18 million in January.

While the share of urban subscribers declined to 66.36 percent from 66.42 percent, the share of rural subscribers increased from 33.58 percent to 33.64 percent, the report said. With this, the total number of telephone subscribers touched 826.25 million, registering a growth of 2.50 percent.



Overall teledensity in India has reached 69.29. Of the total 791.38 million subscribers in February, only 562.98 million subscribers were

active subscribers on the date of peak visitor location register (VLR).

VLR is a database of subscribers who have roamed into the particular area, which it serves. Each base station in the network is served by one VLR, hence a subscriber cannot be present in more than one VLR at a time.

VODAFONE TO BUY OUT ESSAR'S STAKE IN INDIAN JOINT VENTURE FOR \$5 BN

Britain-based Vodafone Group on March 31 said it would buy out its Indian joint venture partner Essar Group's stake in India's leading telecom company Vodafone Essar Limited for \$5 billion.

Essar Group holds a 33 percent stake in Vodafone Essar Limited. After this deal, the global telecom giant will have a 75-percent stake in the Indian mobile operator.

"The Essar Group has exercised its under-written put option over 22 percent of Vodafone Essar Limited (VEL)," said Vodafone Group in a statement.

"Following the exercise by the Essar



Group of its put option, Vodafone has exercised its call option over the remaining 11 percent of VEL owned by the Essar Group, resulting in a total cash payment of \$5 billion," it added. The final settlement is expected by November 2011.

However, Indian norms do not allow foreign companies to hold more than 74 percent stake in a telecom company. So, Vodafone will have to offload the excess holding.

"Vodafone Group's published net debt figure already includes this \$5 billion," the company said.

Vodafone Essar is the Indian subsidiary of Vodafone Group, with Vodafone holding 67 percent and Essar Group 33 percent. The telecom company had bought a 67-percent stake in Hutchison Essar for \$10.7 billion in 2007. The operator is the third-largest service provider by number of subscribers in India with over 130 million customers as on February 2011.

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Wipro to buy U.S. firm's IT business for \$150 mn

Global software major Wipro on April 1 announced it would buy the oil and gas IT service business of the US-based Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) for \$150 million in an all-cash deal.



Wipro chief
Azim Premji

The Virginia-headquartered SAIC's IT business unit provides consulting, system integration, and outsourcing services to global oil majors with domain expertise in digital oil field, petro-technical data management and petroleum application services for the upstream segment.

"Post-acquisition, 1,450 employees of the \$10-billion Fortune 500 firm will join Wipro and will be based across the United States, Europe, India and the Gulf region," the company said in a statement in Bengaluru and in New York. The acquisition will

also strengthen the IT bellwether's presence in the global oil and gas sector through its energy, natural resources, and utilities strategic business unit. "IT spend in the energy sector is expected to grow as customers look for newer streams of revenues, optimizing operational cost and finding better ways to become environmentally conscious," Wipro Vice-President Anand Padmanabhan said.

With oil and gas companies in the upstream business looking at rationalizing cost through IT, the domain consultancy and competencies of SAIC's IT services unit will enhance Wipro's position as an end-to-end leader in servicing customers. "Bringing our skills and client base to Wipro will increase our combined market potential," SAIC's IT services unit Vice-President Rex Ballard said.

Stanford Medical Center's partnership with Jaslok Hospital

Stanford Medical Center, an Ivy League institution in San Francisco, and Jaslok Hospital and Research Center in Mumbai have signed an MoU to study possibilities of cooperation in medical services and training.

In the initial phases, Teleconferencing Programs developed by Stanford will provide Jaslok doctors with top-class education on "hot topics" and offer best therapeutic options to Indian patients.

There would also be opportunities to participate interactively with Stanford's faculty. This could be expanded in later phases with visits by Jaslok doctors to hospitals and clinics at Stanford and its affiliate hospitals in the U.S.

"I firmly believe that Jaslok Hospital's multispecialty doctors will benefit greatly from the Stanford Medical Centre," said Boston-based Indian American Cardiac Surgeon Dr. Mukesh Hariawala. "At Jaslok, we plan to establish a 'Center for Excellence' in cutting-edge medical technologies," Hariawala, who leads Jaslok's International Partnerships Development Program, said.

Siddhartha Mukherjee bags Pulitzer

Indian-American cancer specialist Siddhartha Mukherjee has bagged this year's Pulitzer prize in the general non-fiction category for his book *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*.

Delhi-born Mukherjee's book has been described as "an elegant inquiry, at once clinical and personal, into the long history of an insidious disease that, despite treatment breakthroughs, still bedevils medical science".

The finalists in the category were *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brain* by Nicholas Carr and *Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History* by S.C. Gwynne.

An Assistant Professor of Medicine at Columbia University and a staff cancer physician at Columbia University Medical Center, Mukherjee had said in December last year: "Cancer is growing dramatically in certain parts of South Asia."

Mukherjee advocated a strong anti-smoking campaign and breast cancer screening to battle the growing



Hall of Fame: Siddhartha Mukherjee

incidence of the disease in India.

Less than a month after its publication, Mukherjee's book, published by Scribner, featured among 'The 10 Best Books of 2010' in the New York Times Book Reviews, a rare feat for a work of non-fiction.

The doctor blamed increase in cancer in tobacco smoking as

The book is for everyone. The point was to make the world of medicine and science accessible to anyone interested

"clearly one culprit among young men and women". "But there are other culprits too," he said. "As the population ages and other diseases are slowly eliminated, cancer begins to come about."

"Cancer rises in the double negative only when all the other killers have been killed. So I think that's beginning to occur in some parts of South Asia," Mukherjee said.

Mukherjee, 40, who grew up in New Delhi's Safdarjung Enclave, "immersed in reading and books" at home and studied at St. Columba's School, says he "came into oncology in a sort of reverse, in the sense that I first trained as a cellular biologist when I was in Oxford as a Rhodes scholar".

"So I really came from the cell into medicine. Many people first train in medicine, then eventually get fascinated by cells."

The book isn't meant for the medical profession alone, he said. "The target is everyone. The point of this book was to make the world of medicine and science and culture accessible to anyone who is interested," Mukherjee said.

"This is a disease that has developed in our times in a very poignant way. So I intend this book to be read by anyone who wishes to find out about it: patients and people whose loved ones are affected by cancer or any person interested in its history."

— IANS

'Couldn't believe he won Pulitzer'

When Indian American Siddhartha Mukherjee cancer specialist called his mother at 1 a.m. on April 19 to say he had won the Pulitzer, she thought he was pulling a fast one!

"It came as a complete surprise. Siddhartha called us at 1 a.m. and asked if we were awake. I said of course not — senior citizens don't stay up so late. Then he told me that he has won this prize and I just couldn't believe it," Mukherjee's mother Chandana, who lives in Delhi, said. A resident of Safdarjung

Enclave, homemaker Chandana said they have been flooded with calls since early April after the news broke. "There have been a lot of calls." Asked if they would fly down to meet their son to celebrate the occasion, she said would go only in June. "We had planned our vacation well in advance and have our tickets booked for June. We will go for a month or a month-and-a-half. Then the celebrations are going to happen with Siddhartha, his wife and the kids and his wife's family," Chandana said.

— IANS

Nitin Kotak gets key research post

Non-resident Indian American Nitin Kotak has been elected Vice-President and Chief Financial Officer of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) engaged in advancing scientific research and education in the United States.

Kotak, 53, joins the Institute from Bethesda-based Technest Holdings, Inc., where he was Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer. "Nitin comes to us with great enthusiasm for our mission and significant experience in financial analysis, reporting, and compliance," said Cheryl Moore, HHMI's Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer.

At the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Kotak will oversee budget and financial analysis, the controller's office, treasury, internal audit, and procurement. "I am very excited at this opportunity to be a part of this outstanding organization and work in a spirit of giving back to



Nitin Kotak

the community. I feel honored to be selected for this great responsibility," said Kotak.

During fiscal 2010, the Institute made disbursements of \$889 million, including \$738 million for scientific research and \$89 million in grants to support science education and international research. The Institute's endowment at the close of fiscal 2010 stood at \$14.8 billion.

A senior member of three major

professional institutes in India — the Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Institute of Company Secretaries and the Institute of Cost and Works Accountants — Kotak started his career in 1981 working as the assistant company secretary for a Tata group enterprise, Tinsplate Company of India.

He then spent more than 17 years with ITC Limited where he held a variety of finance-related positions. In 1999, he moved to India-based Mattel Toys, a subsidiary of Mattel, Inc., as its chief financial officer.

Kotak moved to the U.S. in 2003 to become Director of Finance and Accounting for Able Laboratories, Inc., a publicly traded developer and manufacturer of generic pharmaceuticals. A year later, he became Able's Vice-President for Finance and Accounting.

Kotak joined Technest in 2005 as Vice-President for Finance and Operations and became Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer in 2008. — IANS

Architect duo plans unique aesthetics for India

An Indian-American mother daughter-led firm, that has designed several award-winning projects around the world, has now set its eyes on India, with three new contemporary commercial and residential complexes in Gurgaon, the satellite town of the capital New Delhi. "We're a firm that has always had a very strong sense of place, of roots, and of keeping those in view even as we look to the future in our design practice," says New Delhi-born Suman Sorg, Founding Principal of Washington-based Sorg Architects.

"These three new commissions in India give us a chance to demonstrate both of those instincts," said Sorg, who runs one of the largest woman-owned architecture practices in the U.S. with her 30-year-old daughter, Nikki. Sorg has also won a "City of the Future" competition imagining Washington in the year 2108. Sorg's award-winning scheme imagined a "City of Ideas" that envisions it as



A 12-building complex takes cue from classic works of India's past like the Taj Mahal.

an incubator and platform for international exchange and education and yet preserves and enhances its historical identity.

Among the over 250 projects in the U.S. and abroad designed by her firm are the U.S. embassies in Afghanistan, Barbados, Finland

and Saudi Arabia, the Holocaust Memorial Museum, Kovno Ghetto Exhibit, an Egg-Shaped Digesters Facility, the National Library of the Czech Republic and the Library of Congress, and Coolidge Auditorium.

Each of her planned projects for India is unique and uniquely suited to India's natural and cultural climate and will bring high quality contemporary architecture to Gurgaon, says Sorg. "We're excited about these new projects," she says about the three projects called the Grand Arch, Skyon and Sector 62, set to open over the next year-and-a-half.

"We've been working in India for a number of years, but this represents a unique opportunity: these three large-scale, multi-use structures really reflect the best of our long work," Sorg said. — IANS

India's Biotechnology Sector: Growth and Opportunities

The Indian biotechnology sector is one of the fastest growing knowledge-based sectors in India and is expected to play a key role in shaping India's rapidly developing economy. With numerous comparative advantages in terms of research and development (R&D) facilities, knowledge, skills, and cost effectiveness, the biotechnology industry in India has immense potential to emerge as a global key player.

The biotechnology industry in India is likely to see a significant increase in merger and acquisition (M&A) activity, according to research firm Grant Thornton.

The Indian biotech industry crossed the \$3 billion mark in 2010, witnessing a 25 percent growth over the previous year. Of this, while the share of domestic firms stood at 47 percent, exports accounted for 53 percent of the overall revenues. India's high-skill and low-cost advantage is said to have helped in gaining export contracts and clinical research bioservices.

The Indian biotech industry grew threefold in just five years to report revenues of \$3 billion in 2009-10, a rise of 17 percent over the previous year, according to the eighth annual survey conducted by the Association of Biotechnology-Led Enterprises (ABLE) and a monthly journal, *BioSpectrum*, based on inputs from over 150 biotech companies.

The biopharma sector contributed nearly three-fifth to the industry's revenues at \$1.9 billion, a rise of 12 percent, followed by bioservices at \$573 million and bioagri at \$420.4 million. The remaining revenue came from the bioindustrials \$122.5 million and bioinformatics \$50.2 million segments.

Biopharma and bioservices sectors contributed 63 percent and 33 percent, respectively, to the total biotech



exports. The bioagriculture, bioindustrials, and bioinformatics sectors remained focussed on domestic operations, bringing in nearly 90 percent of their revenues from India.

Moreover, according to Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairman and Managing Director of Biocon, which has topped the list of biotech companies in India in the ABLE survey, India is looking forward to achieve \$5 billion in revenue this fiscal (2010-11).

India is also gaining importance as a clinical trial destination. According to a joint study by an industry body and Ernst and Young (E&Y) released in August 2009, the industry-sponsored Phase II and Phase III clinical trial sites in India have grown by 116 percent during June 2008 and August 2009, with the country moving from rank 18 to 12 across the 60 most active countries.

India participates in 7 percent of the

global Phase III trials and 3.2 percent in the Phase II trials with industry-sponsored trials having grown by 39 percent CAGR during 2004-08.

According to a report by the Confederation of Indian Industry and YES Bank, the Indian biotechnology industry is estimated to witness a 20 percent annual growth rate, to reach \$8 billion in 2015 from \$1 billion in 2005. The report forecasts that India will account for 3-5 percent of the global biopharmaceutical market.

Major Investments

Investments, along with outsourcing activities and exports, are key drivers for growth in the biotech sector.

According to data released by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, the drugs and pharmaceuticals sector has attracted foreign direct investment (FDI) worth \$1.85 billion between April 2000 and December 2010.

Some of the major investments in the sector are as follows:

- Swiss Pharma company Lonza AG, plans to invest around \$55.33 million through its Indian subsidiary in a phased manner in Genome Valley project, Hyderabad, said Stefan Borgas, CEO, Lonza.
- Biotechnology major Biocon plans to invest around \$107 million over the next three years to set up plants that will supply generic biotechnology drugs to Europe and the United States, said Murali Krishnan K N, President-Group Finance, Biocon.
- The Defense Research and Development Organization, which caters primarily to the armed forces, plans to spend \$63.5 million to upgrade and custom-make its existing line of biotech products for civilian use.

Tie-Ups

Bangalore-based Biocon Ltd signed a marketing deal with drug-maker Pfizer to globally commercialize four of its insulin biosimilar products. Pfizer will upfront pay \$200 million for the exclusive world rights.

The Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) have entered into an MoU with the Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council (BBSRC), UK, and the Department for International Development (DFID).

The initiative is expected to forge productive global partnerships between scientists in the UK, India and other developing countries to leverage high-quality biological and biotechnological research for sustainable crop production in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. An agreement on Russia-India Biotech Network (RIBN) was signed to serve as a dedicated platform to help facilitate collaboration between Russian and Indian biotech companies on September 14, 2010.

Hyderabad-based contract research firm GVK Biosciences has also partnered with ResearchPoint Global, the US-based clinical organization. Together, the two companies, which

The Government of India and UNESCO have taken a joint decision to establish the Regional Center for research, training and education in biotechnology under the auspices of UNESCO

are full-service contract research organizations (CROs), will offer access to medical writing, clinical data management and biostatistics, as well as quicker patient recruitment.

Biocon Limited has signed an MoU with Malaysia's Biotechnology Corporation (BiotechCorp) to explore collaboration and potential investment in Malaysia's biotechnology industry. Moreover, Sygene International, the custom research subsidiary of Biocon Ltd, has entered into a discovery and development collaboration with Endo Pharmaceuticals of the United States to develop biological therapeutic molecules against cancer.

Government Initiatives

In recognition of the need for training and education for generating interdisciplinary human resource relevant to biotechnology, the Government of India and UNESCO have taken a joint decision to establish the Regional Center for research, training and education in biotechnology under the auspices of UNESCO. The UNESCO Regional Center for Biotechnology is scheduled to come up in Faridabad, Haryana.

Further, the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, has also decided to set up a unique Health Biotech Science Cluster (HBSC) at Faridabad. Moreover, the government will fast-forward the process of setting up a National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority, to stimulate public and private investment in biotechnology.

A draft bill to set up the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) to modulate the research, import, manufacture and use of organisms and biotechnology products is ready, Prithviraj Chavan, then federal Minister of Earth Sciences, had said on November 10, 2010. Besides the federal government initiatives, individual states are also doing their bit to promote the biotechnology industry.

According to B.S. Yeddurappa, Chief Minister of Karnataka, a bio-venture fund with a seed capital of \$10 million will be set up to incubate start-ups by young entrepreneurs.

Meanwhile, the Government of India proposes to set up a \$640.68 million venture capital fund to give a fillip to drug discovery and strengthening the pharma infrastructure in the country, Ashok Kumar, Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, said.

The National Agri Food Biotechnology Institute (NABI), a DBT project, is likely to be ready in the next three years. The autonomous institute, along with a bio-processing unit, would become India's first institute in the field of agri-biotechnology, for which the federal government has earmarked \$86.36 million to be injected in next five years.

The DBT is implementing a program to augment and strengthen institutional research capacity for the promotion of excellence in interdisciplinary science and innovation in specific areas of biotechnology.

Looking Ahead

India is being globally recognized as a manufacturer of economical and high-quality bulk drugs and formulations. With a huge base of talented, skilled and cost-competitive manpower, India has great potential to become a leading global player in biotechnology.

According to Shaw, who is also Chairman of the Karnataka Vision Group on Biotechnology, the next goalpost that the domestic biotechnology sector has set for itself, is to reach a turnover of \$10 billion by 2015.

(Courtesy: The India Brand Equity Foundation)

An ayurvedic calendar to promote healthy living

What's the right lifestyle and diet for the season? To find out, turn to the first of its kind ayurvedic calendar brought out by the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in Varanasi.

The Faculty of Ayurveda at the BHU, a prestigious federal university, has come up with a health calendar that would guide people on how to stay fit and healthy round the year. "Put simply, the calendar would enable people to select the right diet



and lifestyle tips in every season for staying fit," V.K. Joshi, a professor with the University's ayurveda faculty, said in Varanasi on March 25. "You can broadly say the calendar has various guidelines in sync with different seasons that would make people stay healthy," Joshi said.

"The calendar also has other bene-

ficial information. One of them is to make people select the right color for clothes on a seasonal basis — an exercise that helps in healthy living," added Joshi, who has conceptualized the calendar. The calendar is based on *ritucharya*, the time-tested ancient seasonal regimen, which helps keep people healthy through proper diet and lifestyle pertaining to the season.

The guidelines and information in the ayurvedic calendar are based on the seasons as traditionally classified by Hindu calendars.

Jatropha holds potential to be sustainable aviation fuel

There is a significant potential for sustainable aviation fuel based on *jatropha-curcas*, an oil-producing non-edible plant, says a study released by Boeing.

The study, led by Yale University's School of Environmental Studies, has shown that if cultivated properly, *jatropha* can deliver strong environmental and socio-economic benefits in Latin America and reduce greenhouse gas emissions up to 60 percent compared to petroleum-based jet fuel.

"Research study like this is vital to helping developers deliver better social, environmental, and economic sustainability outcomes from *jatropha* cultivation," says Rob Bailis, Assistant



Professor at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

The study, conducted from 2008-2010 and funded by Boeing, used sustainability criteria developed by the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels to assess actual farming conditions in Latin America. A key study finding identifies prior land-use as the most important factor driving greenhouse gas benefits of a *jatropha* jet fuel.

India to launch advanced remote sensing satellite

India will launch an advanced remote sensing satellite on April 20 to study and manage natural resources, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) announced on April 9.

Preparations to launch the 1.2-ton Resourcesat-2 spacecraft onboard the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C16) were progressing well at the Satish Dhawan Space Center at Sriharikota, the ISRO said.

Sriharikota, in Andhra Pradesh, is about 80 km northeast of the southern Indian city of Chennai. The polar orbit rocket will also carry a 92 kg Youthsat, a joint Indo-Russian nanosatellite for stellar and atmospheric studies, and a 105 kg microsatellite X-sat for imaging applications, built by the Singapore-based Nanyang Technological University.

"The launch authorization board will review the readiness of the rocket, satellites and ground stations on April 16. The countdown will begin on April 18 for the scheduled lift-off on April 20 at 10.12 am," the statement said.

The upcoming event will be the space agency's first launch mission after the failure of its geo-satellite launch vehicle on December 25 after 10 connectors snapped within a minute after the 418-ton rocket took off from the spaceport, carrying an advanced communication satellite.

India to study Japan tsunami's impact on Indian Ocean

Indian scientists would study the impact on the Indian Ocean of the Pacific Ocean tsunami that ravaged north-eastern Japan recently, a meteorological department official said on March 23.

"The Pacific Ocean is so vast that if there are some changes in the sea following

the recent tsunami, it will have a global impact. We will study the impact of the Pacific Ocean tsunami on the Indian Ocean," said India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director-General Ajit Tyagi. Scientists are awaiting data related to changes in the pattern of the Pacific Ocean. "We need

to study changes in sea currents, bottom of the sea and ocean conditions, and how it can impact the Indian Ocean," Tyagi said. The devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11 left 9,301 people dead, while at least 13,786 are still unaccounted for.

THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL

By Anil Chandra

(The author, a former Indian bureaucrat, is a short story writer and a scholar. Chandra has also written three books on history covering ancient India and China.)

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Sukhram Lodhi sat leaning against a rock, his turban over his eyes, the warmth of the sun on his bare feet. His feet told him where he was. They knew the feel of the sand and the stones, and the different kinds of grass.

To his right a bird twittered. It seemed to Sukhram that he knew what it was saying. Because he was blind, the birds and beasts let him into their world, made him a party in it. He never spoke of this except to his brother Rajbir and his grandfather Shivpriya Chauhan. They never laughed at him for his fancies.

Sukhram was fourteen and he knew that people were sorry for him. But he thought, if only they could guess how beautiful his world was, they would envy him. Most people did not know about the little rustlings in the grass. They did not know the feel of things, round things like eggs, and water-worm stones, rough things like rocks,

Sukhram was fourteen and he knew that people were sorry for him. But he thought, if only they could guess how beautiful his world was, they would envy him. Most people did not know about the little rustlings in the grass. They did not know the feel of things

or of leather, or of skins. They did not know anything about smells. They went through life with blind noses.

Sukhram spent his time herding his father's hundred goats. He knew them by the sound of their cloven hoofs on the stones by their smell. It was easy to

herd goats. When Sukhram called, they came. When he played the flute, they followed him over his father's fields and the hills beyond.

There was less heat in the sun now. It was time to go. Sukhram got out his flute, raised it to his lips, and blew a note softly. He could feel a movement about him. The goats had raised their heads and were looking toward him. He blew again. The goats were all about him. Now he would play them down the mountain and into the shelter, and tomorrow he would lead them out again. It was a happy life.

But while he had been on the mountain that day, Rani Lakshmi Bai, the queen of Jhansi, declared war on the English and was joined by the indomitable Tantia Tope. He found his father and Rajbir saddling their horses. They kissed him goodbye, their rifles pressing into his chest as they held him.

As the sound of hoofs faded into the distance, he felt his mother beside him.

She put her arm about him. "What will we do now, amma?" he asked.

"We are going son. We are going to your grandfather."

"But it will be dark there. I do not know those fields and how shall I graze my father's goats in a strange place where it's dark?" For the first time he knew what it was to be blind.

In the morning, the horses were hitched to the wagon, and the loose cattle and goats were collected for the fifteen-kilometer trek. "Come Sukhram," his mother said. "We are ready."

He had a long parcel wrapped in sacking. "I am bringing my brother's other rifle," he said. "They say my eyes are clear and black. If anything happened to us, you could stand me right with the gun in my hand, and no one would know."

Sukhram got up beside his mother. Suddenly, he said, "I am nothing amma. I am going to a strange place that my feet do not know, and I am nothing." As the wheels turned, he knew this more than ever.

Later, he asked: "Tell me what you see amma? Can you still see the mountain where I used to graze my goats?"

When they reached there, his grandfather had gone — everyone, all the old men and the boys as well. Sukhram alone was left. There was nothing to do but wait.

Day after day it was the same, never any news. Sukhram was finding his way about his grandfather's farm better now, but it was not home. He did not belong here.

One day, some soldiers passed, tired men on tired horses. Sukhram listened. The shuffling of the horses and the sweaty smell of men, told him all that he needed to know.

"Have you seen my father or my brother?" he asked.

"Who are you?"

"I am Sukhram Lodhi," he said. "I am blind. My father is with Tantia Tope's army."

"We are joining Tantia Tope. We will tell him we have seen you."

Shortly he heard more horses coming. But these were not the horses of

his people. They were heavier and were not being ridden loose reined.

He could hear the jingling of chains, the strike of metal on metal. These were English. They must be in pursuit of the tired men who had passed him earlier.

"Have you seen some soldiers pass, boy?" It was the man on the nearest horse, no doubt the officer in command.

"I have been out all day," Sukhram replied. "I have seen nothing."

"You'll get nothing out of that, boy," another man said, "but they came this way all right and have gone toward the hills. They can't be far away. Their horses are tired."

Yes, their horses were tired, Sukhram thought, but it was strange that these men could not see where the soldiers had gone, when he could feel their spoor with his feet, when the dung of the horses was still warm and

Perhaps it was as well it was dark. Had there been more light, perhaps the men would not have climbed. But they could not see. Among them all, because he was blind, only Sukhram could see



dustless. "Come on then," the officer said, "They can't be far."

The soldiers swirled past Sukhram. There were, as far as he could make out, some thirty of them. But if there was one troop of English cavalry, there would be more. He strained his ears, waiting. It would come soon.

It came, a single shot. Three more, singly — those were his people. The English did not shoot like that. They did not fight like his folk, in small bodies. Their shots were faster now. They were fighting a running battle as they moved toward the mountain. He began to be afraid for Rajbir and his father.

He made his way back slowly.

"Did you see the English?" his mother asked.

"Yes, I saw them, amma, he said. "They spoke to me. They were following some soldiers that were going to join Tantia Tope. Father and Rajbir are there."

"I wish we had news," his mother said.

"Yes amma, it is hard to live without news. It is hard also to be a man and to be here. Today I was ashamed. First to face our folk and then to face the English. I told our people but I did not tell the English. They did not know that I could not see. Oh amma, is there nothing I can do?"

That night Sukhram could not sleep. It seemed as if by not sleeping, by suffering, by thinking, he could help the others. So he built up a battle in his head — by the feel of the sweating necks, imagining of horses, by the smell of men like those who had passed that day, by the sound of rifle bolts, the reek of exploding cordite, the crackle of shots, the sound of hoofs, and the rattle of chains. Suddenly, he sprang up. "Amma, amma" he shouted.

"I have had a dream. It is my brother on horseback. He is riding hard." He ran to his mother. He felt her sitting up in bed. "The gun", he said, "Get me the gun!"

She pushed the rifle into his hand. He opened the bolt and closed it. The cartridge slid into the breech. He found the door and opened it. The

approaching horse had not slowed down.

“Light the lamp, Sukhram said. “Then come and stand beside me.”

He stood in the middle of the doorway. His bare feet gripped the stone floor. His gun was held across him, ready to raise.

“Stop or I shoot”, he shouted. ‘It is Rajbir’s horse, but it might not be Rajbir’, he thought.

“Sukhram... Sukhram... what are you doing with the gun?” It was Rajbir.

“What is it, Rajbir?” his mother asked.

“Amma, I have no time to explain. I have come to fetch Sukhram. Tantia Tope needs him.”

“Tantia Tope? You are taking Sukhram to the war? What can Sukhram do?”

“Yes. What can I do?” Sukhram asked.

“I’ll tell you on the way. Come here.”

Sukhram went toward the horse and felt for his brother’s leg. He held the stirrup with one hand and put his foot into it. His brother had his left hand. He was up.

“Hold fast, Sukhram. We are going to ride.” He had hardly got hold of his brother’s waist when the horse was off. They were galloping. It began to rain. Where were they going? What was he to do? What use could he be to Tantia Tope? The ground grew rougher. There were loose stones. Suddenly, he sat up straighter. He could smell the mountain, his mountain...

“We are nearly there,” Rajbir said. He pulled up. “I am back,” Rajbir shouted. Sukhram felt his brother’s arms around him. He lifted him down.

“Is Sukhram there?” It was his father’s voice.

“I am here, father. Brother has brought me.”

“Where’s the boy?” It was Tantia Tope.

“We are here,” Rajbir said. “Explain what you want of him. I have said nothing.”

“Listen, Sukhram,” Tantia Tope said. “We are a hundred men. The English are to the north and a big com-



mando is driving them back. The English do not know we are here and are retreating toward the river crossing that we are holding.”

“I understand,” Sukhram said. “They will be caught between two fires.”

“Yes,” said Tantia Tope. “But something has gone wrong. A force of English has got to the top of the mountain by another way. We command the crossing but they command us. We are going to attack them tonight, but there is only one path from this side. It is very small, a goat track, and the night is so dark that we can do nothing. Your brother said you could lead us up the mountain.”

“Me. Lead Tantia Tope’s army?”

“Yes, you, Sukhram,” his brother said. “You know the path.”

“Yes, I know the path.” Of course. Had he not been up it almost every day of his life?

They set his feet on the path where it began. His father was behind him; then came Rajbir, and then the others, a long line of men on his goat trail, all following him up his mountain. He was leading the soldiers. His feet knew each stone and root, each bend, each rock. He recognized the scents of the mountain, the trees, the little breezes, the small eddies of air — here it was warmer, there it was colder. “This is a trail for goats,” his father whispered. “I never knew you came up here. I would never have let you come. If you slipped...”

“I’ll not slip. It is my mountain trail.”

He laughed to himself. Perhaps it was good that it was dark. Had there been more light, perhaps the men

would not have climbed. But they could not see. Among them all, because he was blind, only Sukhram Lodhi could see.

“We are nearly there father,” he said as he came to the face of a cliff. He felt for a finger hold in the wet rock and commanded the others to start climbing. Soon, he and his father were on the top. Man after man passed, breathing heavily. There had been no challenge. Tantai Tope whispered instructions. The men spread out.

Sukhram’s father pushed him behind a big stone. “Stay there, Sukhram. We’ll come back for you.”

He must wait now. He could feel them leaving him — feel them creeping toward a camp of sleeping men.

There was a shout and then another. Then everyone was shouting and shooting. There were cries from the wounded. Shots and more shots, a hoarse cheer from Tantia Tope’s men and the shout: “They are running!”

There was a terrific burst of fire. Sukhram could smell burning cordite. A single shot and then nothing till he heard his father call him. “Sukhram, are you there?”

“I am here.”

Someone took his hand. It was Tantia Tope. “I want to thank you,” he said. “Without you this could not have been done, and had it been a fair night, I do not think it could have been done. I do not think we would have faced that climb had we been able to see.”

They were all around him now, pressing against him and taking his hand. They had tears in their eyes. “If it had not been for you...”

“They will make songs of this,” an old man said. “Ballads of Sukhram Lodhi in our local ‘bundeli’ dialect. It was the will of God that you should lead us up the mountain trail.”

Yes, it must have been the will of God that had guided his feet in unaccustomed places, for he had never been up to the top of the mountain before. His goats had been — he knew that, for he could feel their foothold in the rocks. But Sukhram had never been. He had never dared. Not to the top.

New York Indian film fest GETTING BIGGER, BETTER

It could become the Indian counterpart to Sundance. This year's New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF) still features Indian independent and diaspora



Aroon Shivdasani, Executive Director of the Indo American Arts Council in New York

films, but each year "it's getting bigger, better and more exciting than the last", says its creator Aroon Shivdasani. Having it in spring instead of winter — it's in May — will ensure a lot of action inside and outside the theaters,

said Shivdasani, Executive Director of the Indo American Arts Council (IAAC) in New York. "We intend each year to be bigger, better and more exciting than the last," Shivdasani, who created the first Indian film festival in the U.S. back in 2001 soon after 9/11, said.

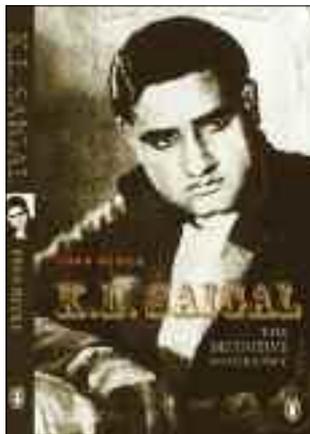
"We want to establish NYIFF as the Indian counterpart to Sundance, add a film bazaar, grow the festival to a whole week of screenings, panels, awards, special events, international interest," she said. "We want to make it THE festival for Independent and Diaspora films from the Indian subcontinent."

The 11th annual edition of the May 4-8 film festival in Manhattan will present Disney's first ever live action Hindi film *Do Dooni Chaar*, starring the actor couple Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Singh, on the opening night.

K.L. Saigal: The Musician of the Masses

Some voices refuse to fade from memory. Legendary musician K.L. Saigal, the musician of the masses and the enduring face of *Devdas* on the Hindi screen, remains one of them even 63 years after his death.

"Saigal's greatest contribution was that he brought music to the masses. Before he arrived on the musical centre stage, music was meant for the elite who either enjoyed it at the salons of professional singers or soirees of maestros like Faiyaz Khan and Abdul Karim Khan," Pran Nevile, author of a new volume *K.L. Saigal: The Definitive Biography*, said. Saigal was gifted with a "divine voice, a flair for writing and composing songs and an imposing screen presence which made him one of the greatest singers of the 20th century and a superstar", said Nevile, a former Indian Foreign Service officer and former UN official, who has authored 12 books on art and culture. Saigal was considered the creator of *sugam sangeet* — the kind of music enjoyed by the masses, he said. Nevile recently unveiled the paperback edition of his new Saigal biography published by Penguin-India. Born in Jammu on April 4, 1904, Saigal was initiated into music by mother Kesar Devi, an accomplished singer who often took him to religious soirees.



Film on Tagore to be made soon



A film on Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's life is to be made soon. In the year of the poet's 150th birth anniversary, director Sangeeta Datta plans to capture the bard's literary excellence on camera.

"The project that I am getting inspired to start work on is something on Rabindranath Tagore's life," said Datta, whose directorial debut *Life Goes On* was released in India on March 25.

"I think it's too early to talk about it. It would be on a small section of his life, on the years he spent in England and it can span out to be a bit larger," Datta said.

Life Goes On is the first film in which veteran actress Sharmila Tagore worked with her daughter Soha Ali Khan. The film made an extensive round of festivals in India and across the world. Owing to some contractual compulsion, she had to release it in India after opening it in the U.S. and Britain, said Datta.

"We had a long festival circuit, you know. We were travelling almost the whole of last year. In December, it was released in the U.S. and in mid-March, it was released in Britain," she said.

The story, script and screenplay are by Datta. The film is a contemporary adaptation of Shakespeare's "King Lear", but it has a hopeful ending.

Apart from Sharmila Tagore and Soha, actor Girish Karnad, Om Puri, Rez Kempton, Neerja Naik, Mukulika Banerjee, Christopher Hatherall, Stef Patten and Aria Gitanjali Banerjee Watts have played pivotal roles in the film.



HOW TO REACH

BY AIR FROM DELHI to Jolly Grant airport in Uttarakhand, and from there by vehicle up to the site in Shiargarh. Or by train from Delhi to Haridwar or Rishikesh and from there by road.

**MAGIC OF
RAJAJI PARK'S
JUMBO HAVEN**

Do you think your life has become a little too monotonous and you need some adventure? Visit Rajaji National Park where you can explore the wilderness in the company of some 400 wandering wild elephants. See these giant mammals up close. They gulp down up to 200 liters of water daily, eat over 200 kg of food, and wallow in the mud for hours in this sprawling reserve ensconced in the Shivalik foothills of the Himalayas in Uttarakhand.

The 800-plus sq km park is home to the largest population of wild elephants in northern India and a cradle for endangered wildlife, such as the sloth bear, ghoral goat, jackal, leopard and tiger.

Leisure Hotels, one of India's leading hospitality groups, is helping tourists discover this tranquil world with a range of itineraries at its Forrest Resort near the reserve.

You can take a jeep safari to the park, or hike to one of the villages atop the picturesque hills early morning. You may even choose to laze around or spend time reading books on your favorite subjects while sitting in a reclining chair on the cold concrete porch of one of the luxury

tent cottages at the resort, as the gentle breeze nourishes you with the scents of the forest.

If you long for a gastronomic adventure or if you are a bookworm, then also there's plenty for you. You can dig into a range of cuisines prepared by the finest in-house chefs. And you may even get inspired to write after enjoying the romantic charm of the place.

During the parched season, a dry riverbed serves as the only motorable road to the resort. This 12-km stretch from Kodiya village up to Shiargarh, where the resort is located, is in itself an adventure, as your vehicle lurches forward through boulders big and small that form the rugged surface of the serpentine channel.

The dry waterbed skirts through the sparsely forested hills, giving you a majestic view of the Shivalik during the ride. And as you prepare for the night ahead, the afternoon sun gently stokes you with a fresh dose of energy. A deep croak of the great hornbill at a distance will alert you to your entry into her territory; so will her cousins, the oriental pied and grey hornbills.

In monsoon, the movement of vehicles on this stretch is not possible. River water with overpowering force

gushes downhill. This abundant seasonal water nurtures the lush deciduous forest of Rajaji, named after the first and last Governor-General of independent India, C. Rajgopalachari. "The Balkumari Temple trek is one of the best places here for hikers," says Ajay Ghale, Corporate Chief Naturalist of Leisure Hotels. "You can get a panoramic view of the mountains from the hilltop."

The resort, gracefully spread in about 10 acres at the base of the Shiargarh Hill, radiates in the dim yellow lights that emanate from some 20 cottages at nightfall. The staff helps you unwind and it's time for barbecue and bonfire.

The Shivaliks beckon. And don't get surprised if a wallcreeper comes calling at your cottage. You will at once fall in love with this tiny, attractive little bird. The night soon takes you to another world as you ground yourself near a bonfire.

"We want the resort to be eco-friendly as much as possible. In the next season, we will try to introduce solar energy for all purposes," says Bankim Sharma, one of the partners at Forrest Resort.

The resort is open from November to mid-June.

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■ Festival of Colors



Students playing Holi, the Festival of Colors, in New Delhi on March 18. Holi also marks the end of winter and the beginning of spring.

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