

India Review

सत्यमेव जयते

■ Vol. 8 Issue 6

■ www.indianembassy.org



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on May 7. Secretary Clinton arrived in India on May 6 for a three-day tour.

India-US to strengthen bilateral ties

■ INDIA IMPROVES
WORLD RANKING IN
TRADE LOGISTICS

■ 'INDIGENOUS'
ANTI-MALARIA DRUG
LAUNCHED

■ EIGHT INDIAN
AMERICANS WIN ELLIS
ISLAND MEDAL OF HONOR

India-US to strengthen bilateral ties

Ahead of the India-U.S. Strategic Dialogue in June 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, during her three-day India visit, stressed that the two countries must work toward strengthening relationships across the spectrum

From strengthening economic ties to deepening security cooperation, from meeting the challenges in South and Central Asia to work toward promoting a shared vision for the Asia-Pacific, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's three-day India visit charted a new course for the India-U.S. bilateral relations.

Ahead of the India-U.S. Strategic Dialogue in Washington, D.C., in June 2012, External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met and discussed several issues in New Delhi on May 8.

"The United States and India are two great democracies with

common values and increasingly convergent interests. In our meetings today, we have worked to focus our agenda and prepare for the strategic dialogues in June," said Secretary Clinton, who was in India on an official visit from May 6-8.

Minister Krishna said that he was looking forward to a productive Strategic Dialogue in June in Washington, D.C., where he would not only showcase the extraordinary progress in the bilateral engagement, but also outline how the two countries intend to take their strategic partnership to a new level.

Reaffirming President Barack Obama's vision of seeing India-U.S. ties as one

of the "defining partnerships of the 21st century", Secretary Clinton said that both the countries should be "working toward having one of the world's largest trading relationships", and underlined the need to "continue to reduce barriers and open our markets to greater trade and investment."

Minister Krishna expressed satisfaction with the progress in India-U.S. relationship and said that the countries were optimistic about the future.

"The emerging global trends only reinforce our shared conviction in the importance of this relationship for the future of our two countries and the shape of the world in this century," he said.

Citing the frequency and depth of India-U.S. dialogue and engagement, he added, "We continue to make tangible progress across virtually every area of bilateral cooperation."

The Minister expressed hope that India-U.S. economic relationship "would grow much faster and realize its enormous potential."

Secretary Clinton underlined that India and the U.S. need to continue expanding trade and investment ties between the two countries. "We have come a long way. When I



External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in New Delhi on May 8.



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (R) with Indian Ambassador to the United States, Nirupama Rao, on her arrival at Palam Air Force Station in New Delhi on May 7.

companies in nuclear commerce and expressed hope that the talks between U.S. and Indian companies would soon result in contracts.

“We welcomed the fact that the Nuclear Power Corporation of India and leading U.S. companies are engaged in direct conversations on how to move forward

together,” Secretary Clinton said.

Saying that India and the U.S. had joined hands in their fight against terrorism and violent extremism, Secretary Clinton point-

Regional and global issues

As the India-U.S. strategic consultations have a global character, the two leaders also shared their views on a range of global and regional issues.

Discussing their vision for Afghanistan, Minister Krishna said, “We stressed the need for sustained international commitment to build Afghan capacity for governance, security and economic development, and to support Afghanistan with assistance, investment and regional linkages.”

Secretary Clinton lauded the efforts of Indian government on its support to Afghan people in building a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

She also appreciated India’s “intention to host a conference in late June to encourage greater private sector investment in Afghanistan.”

The two nations committed to assist Kabul in handling its security, development and governance on its own, without interference from outside, even after the International Security Assistance Force moves out of the embattled nation in 2014.

Secretary Clinton said the U.S. consultations with India on Afghanistan was “very substantive and useful” and that the international community would remain engaged with Kabul on its future.

Recognizing India as a partner in the broad international effort to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, she said, “The best way to achieve this diplomatic solution that we all seek, is for the international community to stay united and to keep the pressure that has brought Iran back to the negotiating table on Iran until we reach a peaceful diplomatic resolution.”

Minister Krishna, noting that he discussed the importance of a peaceful settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue, said it must be based on the position that Iran has its rights as a member of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). “But it must also abide by its obligations as a non-nuclear weapon state under the

“The United States and India are two great democracies with common values and increasingly convergent interests. In our meetings, we have worked to focus our agenda and prepare for the strategic dialogues in June”

— Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

first visited India in 1995, trade stood at \$9 billion, and this year we expect it to surpass \$100 billion. And I actually believe there is much more potential to unleash,” she said.

As part of their discussion on strengthening bilateral economic ties, Secretary Clinton and Minister Krishna discussed the landmark civil nuclear agreement. EAM Krishna said India was committed to providing a “level playing field” to the U.S.

ed out, “Our militaries are conducting training exercises unprecedented in scale and scope.”

India and U.S. Navies were also cooperating to combat piracy, patrol the sea lanes and protect the freedom of navigation, she said.

Secretary Clinton said that India and the U.S. would work toward further deepening security cooperation between the two countries.



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (L) and External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna during a news conference in New Delhi on May 8.

NPT,” he said, asserting that “this issue, however, is not a source of discord” between India and the U.S.

Minister Krishna and Secretary Clinton had “a fruitful discussion on the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean region, including relations with China, and developments in countries in India’s immediate neighborhood.”

In view of the forthcoming East Asia Summit in Cambodia in November, 2012, Secretary Clinton said that India and the U.S. need to work together “to promote a shared vision for the Asia-Pacific”.

Pledging U.S. support for India’s Look East Policy and its growing role across the region, particularly in support of democracy and economic reform in Burma, Secretary Clinton said, “As an experienced democracy, India can provide key support. And greater trade and transit between India, Bangladesh, Burma — the countries of South East Asia — will fuel even more political and economic progress and growth.”

The two leaders urged Pakistan to take “strong and more concerted” action against those outfits that threaten peace and security of the US, India and the world at large.

On fight against terrorism

During his meeting with Secretary Clinton, Minister Krishna noted that the recent violent strikes by Taliban on diplomatic missions in and around Afghanistan’s capital Kabul had once again highlighted the need for elimination of terrorist sanctuaries in India’s neighborhood and “for stronger action from Pakistan” on terrorism, including bringing to justice the perpetrators of the Mumbai attack on November 26, 2008.

At a joint press conference after their meeting, Secretary Clinton said the \$10-million bounty on 26/11 Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz

Minister Krishna and Secretary Clinton had “a fruitful discussion on the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region, including relations with China, and developments in countries in India’s immediate neighborhood”

Saeed was an unmistakable sign of the U.S. “solidarity” with India on bringing the perpetrators of the audacious attack to justice.

Secretary Clinton said the U.S. had every reason to believe Saeed was the “principal architect” of the Mumbai terror strikes that claimed 166 people, including six U.S. citizens.

She noted that terrorism was “incredibly important question” on the minds of both the U.S. and India.

“We both know the tragedies and losses that come with terrorism on our soil. So we have increased our cooperation between India and the US. We are going to continue to do everything we can, not only to prevent terrorists from doing evil acts of violence, but also try to convince people not to get recruited into terrorism,” she said.

During her three-day visit, Secretary Clinton also met with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banarjee.

Following is the statement of EAM Krishna at the Joint Press Conference with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton:

“Madam Secretary, it is a great pleasure to welcome you back to Delhi. I am glad that you decided to visit India on your way back to Washington, DC. This is a sign of our close friendship. It also underscores the importance of regular consultations between our two Governments at a time of enormous challenges and far-reaching changes taking place in the world.

Secretary Clinton and I reviewed the entire gamut of our bilateral relations. We expressed satisfaction with the progress in our relationship and are optimistic about the future. The emerging global trends only reinforce our shared conviction in the importance of this relationship for the future of our two countries and the shape of the world in this century.

We have an extraordinary frequency and depth in our dialogue and engage-

India announces \$5 million for innovation fund



Minister for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Vilasrao Deshmukh addressing the media in New Delhi on May 8. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is seen at right.

India has announced a \$5 million contribution to a joint initiative of Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and USAID Millennium Agency to identify and invest in innovation by civil society. While USAID has already contributed \$7.7 million to the initiative, FICCI hopes to scale up the fund to \$50 million over the next twelve months, Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences Vilasrao Deshmukh said at a joint meeting with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in New Delhi on May 8.

During the meeting, the two leaders committed to further strengthening bilateral cooperation in providing innovative solutions to common problems.

Minister Deshmukh pointed out that India and the U.S. were closely working in the areas of health & biomedical sciences, food security, clean energy, water cycle and climate research.

"Our cooperation in knowledge based industry sectors has ushered in a new spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship amongst our entities. In the past, we were focused on attracting people for science. Now our cooperation also includes science for people of both countries. Our cooperation agenda represents a new measure of mutual trust and confidence," Minister Deshmukh said.

He said that under the Stanford-India Biodesign Program supported by the Department of Biotechnology and the Indo-U.S.

S&T Forum involving Stanford University, AIIMS and IIT-Delhi, about 25 people had been trained to identify major health care needs and develop cost-effective solutions.

The Minister pointed out that India Innovation Growth Program, supported by the Department of Science and Technology and Lockheed Martin Corporation was another successful Public-Private-Partnership model of collaboration between the two countries. "Over 200 Business Engagement Agreements have already been entered involving both Indian and U.S. enterprises. Products of some technologies have entered global market place as well," he said.

The Minister said that US-India Endowment Fund established by the two countries in 2009 was another landmark in the space of technology commercialization.

The Science & technology Minister said that under the Indo-US Joint Clean Energy Research and Development Center (JCERDC), India and the U.S. had committed \$25 million from each side. The joint Center would support multi-institutional networked projects using consortia partnership based on public-private model of funding, he said. "We are focused on areas of mutual interest covering solar energy, second generation biofuel and energy efficient buildings," the Minister said.

He said that under the USAID Millennium Alliance, the two countries could develop competitive and affordable innovations.

"Undoubtedly, our bilateral relationship today is a true partnership that uses the soft prowess of science, technology and innovation for the benefit of people and polity in both our countries," the Minister said.

ment. We continue to make tangible progress across virtually every area of bilateral cooperation. We expressed hope that our economic relationship, which is very important to both countries, would grow much faster and realize its enormous potential.

There are issues on both sides. I did convey our concerns about the continuing difficulties on mobility of professionals, especially for our IT companies, and protectionist sentiments in the U.S. with regard to global supply

chain in services industry. I want to thank Secretary Clinton for her personal attention to the welfare of Indians and Indian students in the US.

Secretary Clinton and I also had a good discussion on the path to fostering commercial cooperation in civil nuclear energy. I assured her of India's commitment to provide a level-playing field to all U.S. companies, within the framework of national law and our international legal obligations. We were pleased that

U.S. companies are engaged in substantive discussions with the Indian operator, Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited. We hope that they will make early progress towards contractual steps.

Our strategic consultations have a global character, with convergence of views on a range of global and regional issues.

We discussed our vision for Afghanistan. We stressed the need for sustained international commitment

Secretary Clinton lauds eastern India's economic potential

The eastern part of India is not only important for its tremendous economic potential but also for its geopolitical significance, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said. "The economic potential of east India is so great...but also its geopolitical significance is being increasingly recognized. U.S. wants to be partner with the entire country. This is my way of demonstrating our commitment to this part of the country," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said at a gathering at the La Martiniere school for girls in Kolkata, capital of West Bengal, on May 7.

"I think it's a great tribute to India that the entire political development of this country is demonstrating the power that is at the core of the Indian dream," she said.

"The more open India becomes over time.. the greater the rise in standard of living and opportunity," she said.

Secretary Clinton, who arrived in West Bengal on May 6, said: "We need to find win-win solutions for everybody."

"We have to work together with the international community on resolving water issues. Unless water is put on a priority list, it can lead to a lot of dislocation."

"This is very exciting for me to have this chance to back in this wonderful city after so many years... I was last here in 1995 honoring the work of Mother Teresa."

On India-US ties, she said that the relationship between "our two democracies is going to define the kind of future we have".

She also lauded the "incredible contribution" of Indian-Americans in the U.S. and said the



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (L) with West Bengal state Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in the state's capital Kolkata on May 7.

people-to-people relationship was at the heart of the ties between the two countries. Secretary Clinton said in 2011, 35 percent of all L1 work visas in the US had been issued to Indians. Addressing a gathering at the La Martiniere school in Kolkata, she said more than 100,000 Indian students were studying in the US.

Secretary Clinton also met with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on May 7 and discussed issues concerning uplift and empowerment of women.

Describing her meeting with Secretary Clinton as "positive, constructive, creative and concrete", Chief Minister Banerjee said the former had expressed interest in investing in the state, considering Bengal as a "partner state".

The Chief Minister said the U.S. could consider investing in the state's software, IT and manufacturing, health and education sectors.

Minister Banerjee said state Chief Secretary Samar Ghosh and the U.S. Ambassador to India Nancy Powell would jointly monitor the projects, which would be set up under public-private-partnership (PPP) mode.

The Chief Minister said Secretary Clinton had assured cooperation of the U.S. government in the economic development of the state.

Minister Banerjee said she would love to welcome President Barack Obama to the state and conveyed her invitation to him through Secretary Clinton.

to build Afghan capacity for governance, security and economic development, and to support Afghanistan with assistance, investment and regional linkages.

Recent attacks in Kabul highlight once again the need for elimination of terrorist sanctuaries in the neighborhood and the need for stronger action from Pakistan on terrorism, including on bringing to justice the perpetrators of Mumbai terrorist attack. We also discussed our respective relations with Pakistan.

I conveyed our vital stakes in peace and stability in the Persian Gulf and wider West Asian region, given the six million Indians who live there and the region's importance to our economy.

We also discussed the importance of peaceful settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiations, based on the position that Iran has rights as a member of Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), but it must also abide by its obligations as a non-nuclear weapons state under the NPT.

Secretary Clinton and I had a fruitful discussion on the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean region, including relations with China, and developments in countries in India's immediate neighborhood. We exchanged views on our recent interaction with our Bangladeshi counterpart also.

Finally, we look forward to a productive Strategic Dialogue in June in Washington, D.C., not only to showcase the extraordinary progress in our engagement, but also outline how we intend to take our strategic partnership to a new level." 

Ambassador Rao meets Delaware Governor



Ambassador Nirupama Rao (center) with Governor Jack Markell (second from left) of Delaware in Dover on May 1. Others in the picture (from left) are Delaware's Secretary of State Jeffrey Bullock, Sudhakar Rao, and Senator from Delaware Tom Carper.



Ambassador Nirupama Rao addressing students and faculty at the University of Delaware on May 1.

expand business linkages, including technology transfer and capacity building in the agro-industry and poultry, between Delaware and India with a group of prominent agriculturists, poultry farmers and business representatives of Delaware. U.S. Undersecretary of Agriculture Michael Escuse also attended the meeting. Ambassador Rao also visited the Avian Biosciences Centre located in the University of Delaware.

In a meeting with Ambassador Nirupama Rao at Dover in Delaware on May 1, Governor of Delaware Jack Markell expressed keen interest in building a robust engagement with India. Governor Markell said that he was planning to lead a delegation from Delaware to India later this year. Senior U.S. Senator from Delaware Senator Tom Carper and Delaware's Secretary of State Jeffrey Bullock

were also present at the meeting. Secretary Bullock, who had returned from India from an exploratory visit, said that as India and the U.S. share common values and interests, the two countries had "immense potential" for further strengthening their bilateral relations. Ambassador Rao visited the state at the invitation of the U.S. Senator Chris Coons from Delaware.

She discussed opportunities to

The Ambassador delivered a keynote address on India-U.S. relations at the University of Delaware, Newark, and interacted with the faculty and students of the University. She University for its excellent research traditions and for building bridges of understanding between India and the U.S. that included more than twenty active collaborative endeavors with Indian counterparts, making a difference in the lives of common people through advances in areas such as agriculture, drinking water, health and clean energy.

Ambassador Rao felicitated



Ambassador Nirupama Rao speaking at the felicitation event organized by Jackson Heights Merchants' Association in New York on May 2. Also seen in the picture is Congressman Joe Crowley.



Ambassador Nirupama Rao and Congressman Joe Crowley at the event. (Photos — Jay Mandal)

At a felicitation event chaired by Congressman Joe Crowley, Jackson Heights Merchants'

Association in Queens welcomed Ambassador Nirupama Rao to the New York City on May 2.

Ambassador Rao thanked the organizers for the welcome and praised the contribution of the Indian-American community in promoting India-U.S. relations. Congressman Crowley said he believed that India-U.S. partnership was one of the most significant partnerships for the U.S. in the 21st century and expressed his commitment to work with Ambassador Rao to take the partnerships between the two countries to higher levels. Congressman Crowley is the Co-chair of House India Caucus and represents the people of Queens and Bronx — districts with a large concentration of Indian-American community.

'India-U.S. to reaffirm strategic partnership'

Addressing the Atlantic Council on 'India-US Strategic Dialogue: Expanding horizons of bilateral partnership' in Washington, D.C. on May 30, Ambassador Nirupama Rao said that India and the U.S. would continue to consolidate and reaffirm strategic partnership. Shared values and the wide range of convergent interests, political momentum, public goodwill, a comprehensive architecture of engagement, and growing levels of comfort and candor in mutual dealings between the two countries point toward such an inference, she said.

"The Strategic Dialogue meetings have provided a unique bilateral forum for stock-taking and giving political direction to the ever expanding landscape of bilateral partnership and created a multi-hued canvas of mutually beneficial cooperation," she said.

Instituted in July 2009, during the first visit of Secretary Clinton to India, the India-US Strategic Dialogue identified five principal pillars for expanding cooperation: strategic cooperation, energy and climate change, education and development, economy, trade and agriculture, science and technology, health and innovation, Ambassador Rao said.

Excerpts from Ambassador Nirupama Rao's speech on the occasion:

I am here today to speak to you about the India-U.S. relationship at a time when we are to hold the next round of the Strategic Dialogue between our two countries in a fortnight from now. The India-U.S. Strategic Dialogue was instituted in July 2009 during the first visit of Secretary Clinton to India in her then new role. Our objective was to make our multi-faceted partnership stronger in areas to which both sides attached importance and which are of vital interest and concern to the daily lives of our two peoples. The Dialogue therefore



Ambassador Nirupama Rao

identified five principal pillars for expanding cooperation: strategic cooperation, energy and climate change, education and development, economy, trade and agriculture, science and technology, health and innovation.

Subsequently, we have held two meetings of the Strategic Dialogue — the first in June 2010 in Washington, D.C. and the second in July 2011 in New Delhi. In the period since that July 2009 visit of Secretary Clinton, we have had the very productive and successful visit to the United States of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, who became the first State Guest of the Obama Administration in November 2009 and also the memorable visit of President Obama to India in November 2010. It was during that visit that President Obama characterized the India-US partnership as one of the most significant, indispensable and defining partnerships of the 21st century.

Just earlier this month, Secretary Clinton visited India again for discussions that reaffirmed what is, as our External Affairs Minister put it, "our close friendship". And in a few days from today, External Affairs Minister Krishna will come to Washington for the third meeting of the India-U.S. Strategic Dialogue.

In these last three years since the

institution of the Strategic Dialogue, we have attempted to translate the vision of our leaders into reality in various ways. The Strategic Dialogue meetings have provided a unique bilateral forum for stock-taking and giving political direction to the ever expanding landscape of bilateral partnership and created a multi-hued canvas of mutually beneficial cooperation.

The foundations that we jointly laid in recent years, by removing irritants and constraints that hobbled the growth of our relationship for a long time, have enabled a strategic partnership that is at once dynamic and infused with positive momentum. Today, there is a remarkable degree of depth and diversity in our partnership; there is comfort and candor in our dialogue; and, there is extensive support for this cooperation across a broad spectrum of public opinion in both our countries. Ours is a relationship, as Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has said, "founded on many pillars, it is based on pragmatism and principle; and strengthened by shared values and common interests."

The strength of our relationship is reflected in the presence of a large India Caucus in both chambers of the U.S. Congress. These are, we understand, the largest bilateral caucuses in the U.S. Congress today. We take immense pride in their efforts to promote our relationship. They have not only done a commendable job in focusing public opinion and attention of both our governments on the importance of our relationship, but have eminently showcased the bipartisan support enjoyed by the India-U.S. strategic partnership.

The full text of Ambassador Rao's speech can be viewed at:

<http://www.indianembassy.org/prdetail1955/address-by-ambassador-nirupama-rao-at-the-atlantic-council---india-us-strategic-dialogue%3A-expanding-horizons-of-bilateral-partnership>

'Keep your eyes over the horizon'

Delivering the convocation address at Pondicherry University on May 19, Ambassador Nirupama Rao urged the students to develop the capacity to keep their eyes over the horizon, "and not be entrapped in the petty immediacy of narrowly defined interests."

"There is much that is expected of you by your country, and there are also great successes that await you, if you are able to invest your training, your skills, and your powers of judgment astutely and wisely," she said.

She said that India's demographic dividend could become its democratic dividend only by providing education to the youth and making them responsible and committed citizens.

Excerpts from Ambassador Rao's speech on the occasion:

Education as a word, springs from the Latin root "educere", which means "to lead forth", "to erect". You students are being led forth into the world of the 21st century, a world very different from the world of my generation of the early nineteen seventies. The world has only grown in complexity over the last few decades, the algorithms you will use to solve the problems or unlock the mysteries of the universe that surrounds us, are going to be very different from the ones my generation sought to master.

There is much that is expected of you by your country, and there are also great successes that await you, if you are able to invest your training, your skills, and your powers of judgement astutely and wisely.

What is the best asset that can propel you on your life's journey apart from eternal hope that should be your ship's sail? It is the power of reason and independent critical thinking. Reason, as Thomas Jefferson said, is "the only oracle given you by heaven". Discard what is irrelevant, as Cardinal Newman said, see things as they are.

Many years ago, the wise and



Ambassador Rao awarding a degree to a student at the 22nd convocation of Pondicherry University.



Ambassador Nirupama Rao laid the foundation stone for an International Convention Centre at the Pondicherry University on May 18.

learned Sree Aurobindo, speaking on the soil of Pondicherry, referred to national education as "something more profound, great and searching... an education proper to an Indian soul and need and temperament and culture that we are in quest of... something faithful (not) merely to the past, but to the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self-creation, to her eternal spirit". The question, as Sree Aurobindo framed it, is not between modernism and antiquity but between the present and the future, not a return to the glories of the fifth century but "an initiation of centuries to come" that is demanded "by the soul, by the *Shakti* of India". And this is where we see the expounding of a universalist vision: that education must help the student to enter into that perfect relationship with the mind and soul of the larger humanity of which we are a

part, of which our nation, our India, is "a separate yet inseparable member".

Aurobindo's words, penned almost a century ago have a profound relevance even today and I have therefore drawn reference to them. His eloquence was unmatched when he issued a call for education to usher in "the alchemy of infinity into the finite life", as is reflected in our tradition through the examples of the brave and forthright like Nachiketa, Markandeya, Savitri and Arjuna. Correspondingly, you must learn to set the highest standards for yourself as also for those around you. The power of intelligent questioning, probing debate, and a passion for truth and abjuring narrow mindedness is what should be your guide. It is not argument for the sake of argument, for let us be known as the intelligent and profoundly thoughtful Indian rather than the merely argumentative Indian.

The full text of Ambassador Rao's speech can be viewed at: <http://www.indianembassy.org/prdetail1951/convocation-address-by-ambassador-nirupama-rao-at-pondicherry-university-%28may-19%2C-2012%29>

The video of Ambassador's speech can be viewed at: <http://www.pondicherryuni.edu.in/content/video-gallery>

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace reception



1. Ambassador Nirupama Rao welcoming and addressing the guests at a reception hosted for members of the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, at the Embassy Residence on May 21.
2. Senator Mark Warner addressing the guests on the occasion.
3. Dr. Ashley Tellis, Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, sharing his views with the audience.
4. Dr. Jessica Mathews, President, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, proposing the vote of thanks.
5. A section of the guests in attendance.

A date with Indian cinema



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1. Deputy Chief of Mission, Arun K. Singh addressing the guests at a reception hosted by the Embassy in connection with the first annual Washington D.C. South Asian Film Festival (DCSAFF) on May 31.
2. Managing Director of DCSAFF, Manoj Singh, speaking about the festival and introducing

- director Shyam Benegal.
3. Indian film director Shyam Benegal sharing his thoughts on contemporary Indian cinema.
4. Actor Manisha Koirala interacting with the audience during the Q&A session.
5. Film and theater artist, Rajit Kapur at the Embassy.

6. Director Ketan Mehta addressing the gathering.
7. Television and film actor Samrat Chakrabarti speaking on the occasion.
8. Actor Suneil Anand sharing his views on the occasion.
9. Guests in attendance.

'India offers strong business opportunity'

Addressing the Asian-American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) Convention 2012 in Atlanta on May 8, Deputy Chief of Mission Ambassador Arun K. Singh said that because of the economic and social developments taking place in India, the country offered a strong business opportunity for AAHOA, both through trade and investment.

"Various studies estimate a demand-supply gap of about 80,000-100,000 rooms (some studies put it at 150,000) in India, especially in the mid-size and budget hotel segment. This is a clear investment opportunity for hotelier members of AAHOA, either on stand-alone basis or in partnership with Indian businesses," he said. He said

India and the U.S. could further strengthen their trade ties.

Besides investment, "India is also an important destination to source hotel supplies from, particularly linen and cutlery and other miscellaneous articles", DCM Singh said.

Strong growth in India's domestic and other segments of tourism, coupled with increased government focus on developing hotel related infrastructure across all business categories, including five star, four star, three star, two star, and one star segments, and in the heritage hotel segment, provided commercial opportunity for AAHOA and its members, he said.

"Strong new innovative products such as wellness and cruise tourism are being created with equally strong gov-

ernment sponsored promotional campaigns such as "Incredible India" and "Athithi Devo Bhavah" to harness the full potential of tourism in India," DCM Singh pointed out.

He said that increasing domestic and business travel, India's growing externalities, and strong connectivity between the Indian population and its Diaspora overseas were some of the factors that created business opportunity for the hotel industry. He said that by helping develop the hotel industry in India, AAHOA could become an important stakeholder in fast growing India-U.S. Strategic Partnership.

DCM Singh also commended the contribution of the Indian-American community in the development of the hotel industry in the U.S.

Consulate EVENTS

'Celestial Dancers of Manipur' screened at CGI New York

Under the 'Distinguished Persons' Lecture' series, the Consulate General of India, New York, organized the screening of *Celestial Dancers of Manipur*, a film by Benoy K. Behl, a renowned art historian and photographer, on May 23. Prior to screening of the film, Behl also conducted an interactive session with the audience.

He said that the people of Manipur believed that they were the descendants of the Gandharvas, celestial musicians, and had always sought communion with the Divine through music and dance. Giving an overview of the prevalent art forms in Manipur, he explained how elaborately Raasalila was performed at the Lai Haroba festival celebrated to please traditional deities in Manipur.

Referring to his various accomplishments, such as having a collection of over 36,000 photographs of Asian monuments and art heritage, hundreds of documentaries on art history, besides the Chair of Buddhist



(Clockwise from top left) Consul-General Prabhu Dayal introducing art historian and photographer Benoy K. Behl to the audience; Benoy K. Behl interacting with the audience; a section of the guests during the screening of *Celestial Dancers of Manipur* at CGI New York on May 23.

Art, Architecture and Philosophy, Centre of Indology, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, etc., Ambassador Prabhu

Dayal, Consul-General of India, New York, said Behl had made an indelible mark in his field.

CGI Atlanta



1. Consul-General of India in Atlanta Ajit Kumar and Margret Kumar with Georgia Governor Nathan Deal and Ms. Deal at a reception for the Consular Corps hosted by Governor Deal on April 21.
2. Former Energy Secretary and former Governor of New Mexico Bill Richardson with Consul-General Ajit Kumar at a reception in Atlanta on April 28.
3. Consul-General Ajit Kumar with former U.S. President George W. Bush at Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) Annual Convention on May 3.
4. Consul-General Kumar addressing the audience at a reception hosted in his honor by Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce on May 14.

CGI Houston



Consul-General Sanjiv Arora speaking at a reception hosted by M/s Welspun, an Indian company, to celebrate the 3rd anniversary of their pipe manufacturing plant at Little Rock, Arkansas, during the 42nd Offshore Technology Conference (OTC) in Houston on May 1.



Consul-General Sanjiv Arora (second from right) with representatives of Indian companies at the OTC held in Houston in the first week of May.

Showcasing Buddhist heritage



Benoy K. Behl addressing the gathering at the event.



At an exhibition held from May 19–May 31 at Gandhi Memorial Center, Bethesda, Maryland, renowned art historian and photographer Benoy K. Behl, with the sponsorship of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), showcased his photographs on the Buddhist heritage of the world. The event also featured a brief talk by Behl and a film screening. He also held an interactive session with the audience on the occasion.

Addressing the audience, Behl said, “One of the miracles of the story of man is the travel of ideas, across formidable barriers of high mountains, vast oceans and political boundaries. One of the greatest examples of the dissemination of philosophic and artistic ideas is the spread of Buddhism from the Indian subcontinent to the many countries of Asia. It was a great pleasure to have my exhibition of photographs on the Buddhist heritage of the world displayed at the Gandhi Memorial Center.”

“The atmosphere was just right for conveying of true and beautiful ideas, which reach us through Indian philosophic and artistic traditions. Carrie Trybulec and the others at the Center did create a fine environment to share these subjects,” he said. 



Different views of the exhibition at the Gandhi Memorial Center.



Carrie Trybulec, Director, Gandhi Memorial Center.

Behl's exhibit evoked tremendous interest'

Carrie Trybulec, Director, Gandhi Memorial Center, Bethesda, Maryland, has said that Benoy Behl's exhibition at the Center from May 19-31 evoked tremendous interest among the audience. Calling the response from the audience "wonderfully positive", she said that most of the visitors had commented on the informative nature of the exhibition. Excerpts from an interview with Carrie Trybulec in connection with Behl's exhibition at the Gandhi Memorial Center...

Q: People in the greater D.C. area visited the Gandhi Memorial Center in large numbers to view the exhibition spanning for two weeks. How do such events fit into the larger direction of activities of the Center?

Carrie Trybulec: Since 1976 when the Gandhi Memorial Center was dedicated to public service by the then Ambassador of India to the United States T. N. Kaul, Founder of the Center Swami Premananda and its Founding Director Srimati Kamala, the Center has continuously strived to share the highest and best of India in the American capital through a variety of cultural expressions and educational activities.

Q: How has been the feedback from those who witnessed the exhibition?

Carrie Trybulec: The response we received from the guests after viewing the exhibit by Benoy K. Behl was wonderfully positive. Each visitor commented on the informative nature of this exhibition. Beyond the beautiful images, each photograph is presented with text that give both historical details as well as insights into the deeper meaning of the content depicted. Additionally, the presentation offered by Benoy K. Behl along with his brief film screening was extremely well received. Each individual who attended his presentation was enthralled with his knowledge, wisdom, and eloquence.

With the theme 'The Journey of Ideas: The Spread of Buddhism', one guest even commented that Behl himself must be a Bodhisattva!

Q: What in your view was the most striking feature of the photo exhibit?

Carrie Trybulec: In my opinion, one of the most striking features of the exhibit was that it contained photographs of a culture that arose in India and spread throughout the world. I believe this exhibit to be a tremendous contribution shared by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) with the world at large.

Q: Over the years, the relationship between the Embassy and the Gandhi Memorial Center has become increasingly substantive. What other events did you host in recent months and what comes next?

Carrie Trybulec: In recent months the Gandhi Memorial Center has collaborated quite extensively with the Embassy of India staff and families in Washington, DC. The Gandhi Memorial Center on May 5, 2012 presented a book launch by Dr. Smita Tewari Jassal, wife of the late Ambassador Raminder Jassal, with her new publication, *Unearthing Gender: Folksongs of North India*.

In an effort to present Indian cultural heritage with members of the retired professional community in the

Washington metro area, the Gandhi Memorial Center relied on support from the Embassy of India and brought elements of Indian arts and traditions to individuals from 60 to 90 years of age during the months of March, April and May.

The Gandhi Memorial Center also collaborated with the Embassy of India in sharing the cultural heritage of India with a group of 12 and 13-year-old students from a DC Public School through the Embassy School Adoption Program of the Washington Performing Arts Society Women's Committee. On May 24, 2012, this group of students visited the Gandhi Memorial Center and were introduced to the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and various Indian cultures and traditions.

The Embassy of India has been instrumental in connecting the Gandhi Memorial Center with a wide variety of resources and has offered support in linking the Center with opportunities to host exhibitions and artists sponsored by the ICCR.

Every year since the mid 1970s, the Gandhi Memorial Center has presented its annual observance of Gandhi Jayanti in cooperation with the Embassy of India in Washington, DC. In the months ahead, the Center will finalize plans for annual observance of Gandhi Jayanti to honor and remember the thoughts of Gandhi. ■■■

India defers GAAR by a year

India has deferred implementation of the General Anti-Avoidance Rules (GAAR) by a year and also announced that the burden of proving tax evasion would lie with the authorities, a move that is expected to reassure overseas investors and the industry.

Moving the Finance Bill for 2012-13, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee told Parliament on May 7 that the government was going to add an independent member to the GAAR panel. "The GAAR provision will now apply to income of financial year 2013-14 and subsequently," he said.

The Finance Minister said the proposed retrospective amendment in the Income Tax Act would not override the provisions of the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) which India has with 82 countries.

"It would impact those cases where the transaction has been routed through low tax or no tax countries



Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee

with whom India does not have a DTAA," he said.

Minister Mukherjee reiterated that retrospective clarificatory amendments would not be used to reopen any cases where assessment orders had already been finalized.

The Finance Minister said taxpayers, both residents and non-residents, would be able to avail the facility of advance rulings. This means the taxpayers can approach the advance ruling authority and check whether their proposed arrangements (corporate structures) will be permissible under the GAAR provisions or not. If it fails the GAAR provisions, then there is a risk of such transactions getting taxed in India.

The Finance Minister also announced the constitution of a committee under the Director General of International Taxation to suggest safeguards so that the provisions are not applied indiscriminately.

The Finance Minister also said that tax for NRI investors would be slashed to 10 per cent from 20 per cent.

In other measures, Minister Mukherjee announced roll back of the proposed 1 percent tax deduction at source on transfer of immovable property. He also announced the withdrawal of 1 percent central excise duty on branded and unbranded jewelry.

Government to set up fund to promote R&D

The government is planning to set up an electronic development fund to promote innovation and commercialization of products in the IT sector.

"Under the draft National Policy on Electronics 2011, it has been proposed to create an electronic development fund to promote innovation, R&D, commercialization of products in the IT sector," Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Sachin Pilot told the Lower House of the Parliament.

The policy also proposes to provide incentives for setting up of over 200 electronic manufacturing clusters (EMCs) with world class logistics and infrastructure and easy to do business facilities.

The support is intended for greenfield EMCs and upgradation of brown-field EMCs.

The draft national policy National Policy on Electronics is currently in the public domain for consultations. The policy has not yet been finalized.

'Revised defense offsets policy will encourage Indian SME sector'

A major portion of the defense offsets opportunity for Indian companies is in the areas of engineering outsourcing, maintenance, repair and overhaul, with the revised policy encouraging development of small and medium enterprises, according to consultancy firm Frost and Sullivan.

"Majority of the offset opportunity in India lies in engineering service outsourcing (ESO), maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), enterprise resource planning (ERP), information technology, control systems, research and development."

Under the defense offsets policy, 30 percent of all military hardware deals have to be ploughed back into India's defense, aerospace or homeland security sectors.



Defence Minister A. K. Antony at the DEFEXPO 2012, a biennial land, naval and internal security systems exhibition, in New Delhi on March 29.

The revised offset guidelines provided an incentive to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by allowing foreign vendors to select MSMEs as their offset partners by introducing a multiplier of 1.5 for all offsets discharged through them, said the consultancy firm.

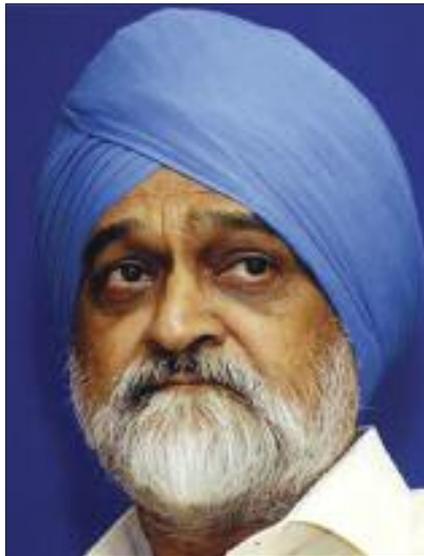
'India can grow at 8-9 pc for next 20 years'

India can grow at 8 to 9 percent for the next 20 years despite many domestic challenges, Deputy Chairman of India's Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia said and urged the international community to take supportive measures like resolving the European sovereign debt problem and concluding the Doha Round of trade liberalization talks early to achieve this.

"We believe India has the potential to grow at rates between 8 and 9 per cent for the next twenty years and to do so in an inclusive manner," Ahluwalia said participating in a United Nations General Assembly debate on "State of the World Economy and Finance in 2012" in New York on May 17.

"There are many challenges we have to face domestically to achieve this target, but we believe we can do so," he said. "We are willing to work with others to make it so," he added.

The Indian economy grew at an average rate of 9 percent in the five



Deputy Chairman of India's Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

years prior to the 2008 financial crisis. The growth slowed down to just over 7 per cent following the crisis.

He said India would be greatly helped in achieving the target if the global community took steps to restore

growth in the developing world.

"The economic woes we face today cannot be overcome without the major developed countries taking the lead to stimulate economic growth."

These included an early agreement on the resolution of the sovereign debt problem in the eurozone and a well functioning international financial system channeling resources efficiently around the world.

"Early resolution of the eurozone crisis would remove much of the uncertainty which currently pervades financial markets and which affects investor sentiment adversely", Ahluwalia said.

He said it was satisfying to note that India's growth rates had remained more robust than many would have expected. "Given the much higher growth potential in developing countries, a well functioning financial system should ensure a sufficient flow of long-term capital towards them," he added.

India improves trade logistics ranking

By pursuing reforms and going in for public-private partnerships in infrastructure, India has improved its position in the world ranking of countries in trade logistics despite a global slowdown in the sector in the last two years, says the World Bank.

India with a Logistics Performance Indicators (LPI) score of 3.08 was ranked 46th in the bank's latest survey of international freight forwarders and express carriers.

Singapore with a score of 4.12 was listed as the top performer among the 155 economies included in the survey.

In 2010, India was ranked 47th with an LPI score of 3.12. However, in the

context of global recession, the World Bank has singled out Chile, China, India, Morocco, South Africa and the U.S. as countries which have continued to improve. As the report says: "Against others in their income group, the most overperforming non-high-income countries are Vietnam, India, China, and South Africa."

"All top performers show strong cooperation between the public and private sectors, and a comprehensive approach in the development of services, infrastructure and efficient logistics," said Mona Haddad, Sector Manager in the World Bank's International Trade Department.



'Domestic IT market grew to \$16 billion in 2011-12'

The domestic Information Technology (IT) market has grown by 16.7 percent to reach \$16.4 billion during 2011-2012, Minister of State for Communications and IT Sachin Pilot told the Parliament on May 18.

"The domestic market has increased from \$14.1 to \$16.4 billion," he said.

The minister also said that the aggregate revenue for the IT sector is estimated to cross \$100 billion in 2011-12 from \$88 billion during previous financial year.

The IT sector has been growing at a compound annual growth rate of 17 percent over the last five years. According to Minister Pilot, the contribution of the IT sector to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased from 6.4 percent in 2008 to 7.5 percent in 2012. The sector has provided direct employment to 2.8 million people and indirect employment to 8.9 million people.

'Indigenous' anti-malaria drug launched

Indian pharma major Ranbaxy launched a new 'indigenous' anti-malaria drug at a ceremony in New Delhi to mark World Malaria Day that fell on April 25.

The new drug, called Synriam which is effective against the deadliest malaria microbe, Plasmodium Falciparum, would be a boon for millions of malaria patients around the globe, said Ranbaxy Chief Executive and Managing Director Arun Sawhney.

"Almost 77 percent of the 2.5 million malaria patients in South East Asia are in India. Synriam will certainly become the preferred option in the hands of doctors to fight malaria, which annually claims half a million lives globally," Sawhney said.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Science, Technology and Earth Sciences Vilasrao Deshmukh said he had been told (by Ranbaxy) that "Synriam is safe and efficacious. I am sure they (Ranbaxy) will ensure that



Minister for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Vilasrao Deshmukh speaking on the launch of new anti-malaria drug in New Delhi.

the drug is affordable, as malaria affects the poor more".

"Globally, the Indian pharmaceutical industry is ranked third in volumes and 14th in value. This is not because our quality is lower, but because our profit margins are minimum. I congratulate our pharma companies for keeping the prices of life-saving medicines low," Minister Deshmukh added.

Nuclear scientist Anil Kakodkar to be honored

Eminent nuclear scientist Anil Kakodkar will be conferred this year's Maharashtra Bhusan Award for his contribution in making India a major global atomic power, an official said in Mumbai on April 26.



Anil Kakodkar

Chief Minister of Maharashtra Prithviraj Chavan made the announcement after a selection committee headed by him arrived at the decision on the state's top award being given to Kakodkar, a former head of the Atomic Energy Commission, for the year 2011-12.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar then telephoned Kakodkar to congratulate him and lauded his contribution in making India a major nuclear power in the world.

Born on November 11, 1943 at Barwani in Madhya Pradesh, Kakodkar has also been honored with India's top civilian awards, Padmashri (1998), Padma Bhusan (1999), and Padma Vibhushan (2009).

Now, a robotic way to hassle-free surgeries

Four finger-tip sized incisions, four robotic arms, including a camera eye snaking inside, the magnified image of the visceral organs being watched on a screen outside as the surgical instrument arm moves deftly to remove the tumor or blockage. Minimal blood loss, no long hospital stay — welcome to the revolutionary world of robotic surgery that is gaining popularity in India.



A robot-assisted surgical system used for prostatectomies, cardiac valve repair and gynecologic surgical procedures.

Some of the major hospitals in the capital, including the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), are performing complex surgeries the robotic

way. Major procedures such as removal of tumors, heart surgery and gynecological surgery that would traditionally require the scalpel to make large and deep cuts in the body and consequent blood loss are now being done with robotic arms.

"Robotic surgery allows us to do many complex operations that would require large incisions," Sudhir Srivastava, Chairman,

CEO and Managing Director, Fortis Healthcare International Centre for Robotic Surgery in New Delhi, said.

Srivastava said conventional cardiac

surgery requires splitting of the sternum, but in robotic surgery, using a robotic surgical system called Da Vinc, just four-five finger-tip sized incisions are all it requires. "The tips of the robotic arms behave like human wrists and allows us to do complex surgeries through tiny holes," he said.

The camera arm of the robot allows surgeons to see inside the body in 3D. The image of the internal organs — magnified up to 10 times in high definition — shows up on a screen at the surgeon's console. Using hand and foot controls, the surgeon directs the robotic arms with the surgical tools to perform the required procedure.

"The camera acts as the eyes, while the instruments act as the arms of the surgeon," said Srivastava, adding that the surgery is "very precise".

Nine Indian-Americans in 'Forbes' Midas List



From left, Aneel Bhusri, Neeraj Agrawal, Rob Chandra, Subrata Mitra and Vinod Khosla.

Nine Indian-origin entrepreneurs made it to this year's *Forbes* 'Midas List of Technology's Best Investors' for fuelling a bull market for hot young companies.

Heading the Indian-American list is Greylock Partners' Aneel Bhusri at No. 25 (15 in 2011). Bhusri is co-CEO of Workday, the cloud-based financials and human resources software company.

Four-time consecutive Midas member Rob Chandra of Bessemer Venture Partners comes next at No. 28 (26 in 2011).

Sameer Gandhi of Accel Partners is ranked 33rd (81 in 2011). He has current investments in an Indian online shopping site called Flipkart.

Khosla Ventures' Vinod Khosla follows at No. 34 (71 in 2011). Khosla is known for off-the-beaten-path clean-tech investments.

Other Indian-Americans on the Midas list include Battery Ventures' Neeraj Agrawal at 36 (51 in 2011), Mayfield Fund's Navin Chaddha (46), Bain Capital Ventures' Ajay Agarwal (95), Greylock Partners' Asheem Chandna (96) and Accel India's Subrata Mitra (99). — IANS

Eight Indian-Americans win Ellis Island Medal



Clockwise from top left, Ravishankar Bhooplapur, Dr. Sanjiv Chopra, Dr. Leena N. Doshi, Hasu P. Shah, Rajendra Singh, Dr. John P. Thomas, Peter Bheddah and Dr. Surendra V. Jain.

Eight Indian-Americans are among the recipients of this year's Ellis Island Medal of Honor presented to more than 100 immigrants for their community service. The eight, Peter Bheddah, Ravishankar Bhooplapur, Dr. Sanjiv Chopra, Dr. Leena N. Doshi, Dr. Surendra V. Jain, Hasu P. Shah, Rajendra Singh and Dr. John P. Thomas were presented the medal at a ceremony on the island in New York.

Instituted in 1986 by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations to recognize the contributions made by immigrants, the medals are named after Ellis Island, the gateway through which more than 12 million early immigrants passed.

Beddah has been helping the less fortunate through the India Association of Long Island and the Interfaith Nutrition Network since 1994. Bhooplapur is President of Xavier University School of Medicine and founder and chairman of Gift of Life. He contributes to several humanitarian causes.

Chopra, a Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, is the author of five books, including *The Ten Tenets of Leadership*. Mumbai-born Doshi started radiology practice in 1985 after completing her residency in radiology at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York. Jain is founding partner and Chief Medical Officer of Buena Park, California-based AppleCare Medical Management LLC. Shah is founder of the Philadelphia-based Hersha Hospitality Trust. Singh is chairman and CEO of Telcom Ventures. Kerala-born Thomas is the founder of Operation HOPE (Healing Outreach to People Everywhere). — IANS

'Committed to bring in change'

Reshma Saujani, the first Indian-American woman to run for the U.S. Congress, said she was "committed to being a leader in charting the future of New York City" and now as a change agent wants to create opportunities for immigrants who have made New York City their home.



Reshma Saujani

Although Saujani, a lawyer, politician and entrepreneur, lost her 2010 ambitious run against Democrat Carolyn Mahoney, a nine-term member of the U.S. House of Representatives from New York, she is now "exploring a race for citywide office in 2013."

"My 15 months at the Public Advocate's office were truly some of the best of my life," Saujani, currently the deputy advocate for special initiatives in the watchdog body charged with ensuring that all New Yorkers have a voice in shaping the city's policies, said.

Explaining what made her run for the U.S. Congress in the first place, Saujani said: "I've always been an organizer, and as the daughter of immigrants I have always been especially passionate about engaging people in the political process, who have been excluded from it or who felt no one was listening to them." — IANS



Enrolment rate in private schools in rural India has gone up by 5.5 percent over the past six years, according to a recent study.

Rural India accounts for almost 70 percent of the population in India as the 2011 Census indicates that of the 1.21 billion population, 833 million live in rural India. People in rural India have been exposed to new communication technologies and a plethora of services which has strengthened its aspirations to become an urbanized society. According to a recent study, rural Indian economy is highly supported by increasing disposable income, government initiatives and schemes and favorable demographics.

Moreover, economic growth of rural India is largely attributed to the increasing awareness about the need of education. According to the Assessment Survey Evaluation Research (2012) report, private school enrolment in rural India has gone up by 5.5 percent points over past six years.

Retail in Rural India

Retail chains in India are targeting hinterlands in a big way. For many companies, a large part of their

Winds of Change in rural market

revenues come from rural sales. Many of the retailers are therefore focusing their strategies on rural needs and offering customized products.

Rural retail arm Hariyali Kisaan Bazaar (HKB) is planning to open 10 outlets in 2012. It is India's biggest rural retail chain by sales and operates 230 stores across eight states. HKB is also planning to partner with mobile telephone companies to provide farm and commodity advisory services to the farmers.

Indian footwear industry, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 15 percent, is anticipated to reach approximately \$7.87 billion by 2015 from the current level of around \$4.48 billion, according to a study by a leading industrial body. The

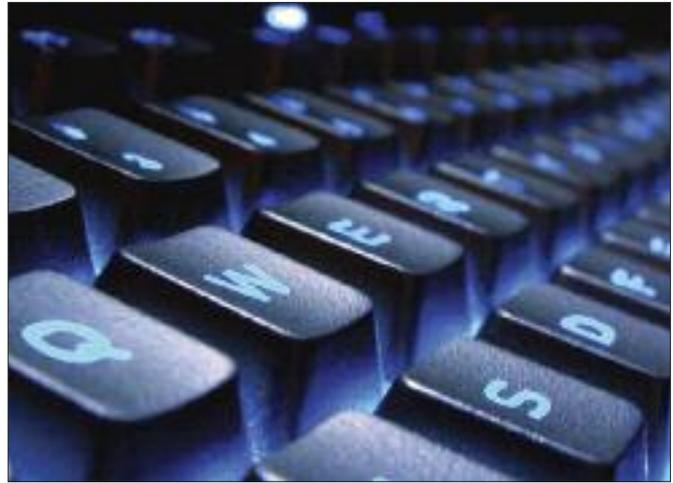
projected growth is based on larger penetration into tier II and III cities and growing rural market for premium footwear.

FMCG

Higher disposable income in rural households along with massive advertisements by the market players, would take rural FMCG market from current \$18 billion to a market size of over \$21.64 billion by 2012, according to a study by an industrial body. This entails a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10 percent in totality for rural and semi-urban areas.

Indian FMCG veteran Dabur is planning to double its rural reach by rolling out its new rural distribution strategy in 2012. Similarly, Godrej Consumer (dealing in hair color, soaps, toiletries and liquid detergent segments) has realized sharp rise in its sales volume rural areas.

Paint companies, which used to rely on cities for growth in sales, are now launching low-cost emulsions to suit needs and preferences of rural consumers.



Automobiles

Rural India accounts for almost 35 percent of the automobiles sold in India. While Ford is dedicatedly working with its retail banking partners to target the rural customers, General Motors has laid renewed focus on its rural marketing initiatives.

Toyota is also planning to strengthen its rural reach and set up additional 25 outlets in semi urban and rural areas in 2012. Hyundai offers customized finance schemes to its rural customers and encourages its dealers to open more sales branches in smaller markets. The company already has 340 dealerships and over 1,000 rural sales outlets which it plans to enhance further in 2012.

Consumer Durables

India's consumer durables market is anticipated to expand by 40 percent in 2011-12, according to a study by an industrial body. Eureka Forbes has launched one-of-its-kind solar bulb in India under the brand name 'EuroDiya'. Eurodiya is taken as an alternative to kerosene lamps which are used in villages. In recent years, rural India has also witnessed the launch of solar-powered lanterns and light emitting diode (LED) lights from companies like Philips and Mirc Electronics.

Internet and e-Commerce in Rural India

Companies selling products and services through internet are searching out for smaller cities to expand their busi-

nesses as internet penetration and adoption of mobile devices increase across rural India. According to Mukesh Bansal, Founder and CEO, Myntra.com, the convenience of shopping and access to big brands are driving growth of e-commerce segment among non-metro markets.

According to eBay Census 2011, rural India accounted for 9 percent of the purchases made online between July 1, 2010, and June 30, 2011. Another report by Google stated that in 2011, over 70 percent of search happened in non-metros.

Thus, such data reveal the fact that rural consumers are increasingly becoming aware of internet usage and are adopting new, sophisticated communication technologies with open arms.

Rural India Calling

Rural business process outsourcing (BPO) units account for over \$10 million toward India's IT-BPO revenues. Many big IT-BPO companies in India are getting attracted toward hinterlands due to availability of immense untapped talent and lower costs.

Rural consumers are increasingly becoming aware of internet usage and are adopting new, sophisticated technologies

Attrition rates in rural areas are just about 3-5 percent as against a high of 50 percent in urban BPOs. Employee costs in rural BPOs is almost half as against that of urban BPOs which bring overall operational costs down by almost 30-40 percent for IT companies. Nasscom has further stated that employee base in these areas would expand by over 10 times by 2013-14 from 5,000 in 2009-10.

Government Initiatives

The Government of India is making all possible efforts to emancipate rural India. Jairam Ramesh, Minister for Rural Development has stated that the Government has decided to implement a more streamlined rural jobs guarantee programme from April 2012 to boost farm production, increase transparency and minimize graft.

Road Ahead

According to Ranjan Kapur, Country Manager, WPP India, rural marketing communication is going to emerge in a big way as the users of smart phones are expected to grow from 50 million to touch 150 million by 2014. To increase internet penetration in rural India, the Government will create 250,000 nodes for broadband by 2016 that would serve around 750,000 villages. There is no denying the fact that India's growth in terms of consumption pattern is largely led by the people residing in hinterlands.

(Courtesy: India Brand Equity Foundation)

Time ranks 'Devdas' among millennium's top ten

Time magazine has ranked Bollywood director Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 2002 film *Devdas* eighth among the 10 greatest movies of the millennium with *WALL.E* at the top and *The Artist* in the 10th spot. It described Shah Rukh Khan as an "all-world charismatist" and Madhuri Dixit "a hot number who danced flamencos on men's libidos".

"A year after 'Moulin Rouge!' had its world premiere at Cannes, another visually intoxicating musical opened at the festival, introducing sang-and-danced Bollywood dramas to the international culturati," it said of the film starring Shah Rukh Khan, Aishwarya Rai and Madhuri Dixit.

"Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's 1901 novel inspired at least a half-dozen film versions before this one — in its time, the priciest movie in Indian history (at about \$10.6 million)," the U.S. news magazine noted.

"The piece is played with such commitment that the tritest plot twists seem worth believing — and dancing to, in nine nifty production numbers. But the fervid emotion is



A poster of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas*.

The top ten according to *Time*

- ◆ WALL.E, 2008
- ◆ The Lord of the Rings, 2001-03
- ◆ Avatar, 2009
- ◆ Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, 2000
- ◆ The White Ribbon, 2009
- ◆ The Hurt Locker, 2009
- ◆ Synecdoche, New York, 2008
- ◆ Devdas, 2002
- ◆ Moulin Rouge!, 2001
- ◆ The Artist, 2011

what makes the thing sing," it said.

"Beyond that, *Devdas* is a visual ravishment, with sumptuous sets, fabulous frocks and beautiful people to fill them; it has a grandeur the old Hollywood moguls would have loved," the magazine said.

Indian-American director's thriller wins award

A Bollywood-style film by an Indian-American director, has won the Best Feature Film award at the Peoples Film Festival (TPFF) in New York, showcasing extraordinary films using different media formats. Written and directed by Manan Singh Katohora, *9 ELEVEN* portrays the life of 11 people terrorised to the core



by an unknown entity in an unfamiliar place.

Katohora also won the 2012 Rising Star Award for the film at Canada International Film Festival.

'Dekh Indian circus' on a roll

It is a film he hasn't written, directed or produced. But filmmaker Imtiaz Ali is so touched with Mangesh Hadawale's Hindi movie *Dekh Indian Circus*, a tale set in the rural milieu of Rajasthan, that he has decided to present and promote it to take it to a larger audience.

"I'm trying to help this film reach big circles. It is set in Jaisalmer, and is about two kids and an Indian circus. The story has been narrated in an extremely colorful and emotional manner and it is only better that it reaches to a wide audience," Ali said.

Indian entertainment's 'laadli' turns 100

She was born a year before Indian cinema. The blue-eyed "baby" of entertainment, Zohra Sehgal, celebrated her 100th birthday on April 28 — punning on her favorite sonnet 'Abhi To Main Jawan Hoon' by poet Hafeez Jullundhri as she cut a large chocolate cake.

Her characteristic lust for life appeared undimmed at the launch of her first official biography, titled *Zohra Segal: Fatty* by daughter Kiran Segal. And "Segal" is how they have preferred to spell the name.

The title "Fatty" is an endearment



used by Kiran for her "weight conscious mother Zohra" who "is very particular about her figure like a 16-year-old starlet".

Born on April 27, 1912, in

Saharanpur to Rohilla Pathan landlords, Zohra went with her uncle to England by road from India "in an old Dodge car through Afghanistan and Iran" to train as an actor.

The biography, a pictorial monogram, published by Niyogi Books was unveiled by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's wife Gursharan Kaur.

Releasing the book, Kaur said, "Zohra is a multi-faceted icon of a youthful zeal. She is a mysterious woman though her life was an open book."

Adventure unlimited



Rafting in the rapids of the Ganga at Rishikesh and ending the course with a leap of faith into swirling green waters from a 25-foot-high cliff face, for Rishabh Sharma, his birthday couldn't have been more exciting.

And he is not an adventure freak. Usually, birthdays have involved partying with friends in a nearby discotheque. But this time, the 24-year-old software engineer took the road less travelled.

"This was a fabulous experience. I had not thought I would enjoy so much," a visibly exhausted but cheery Sharma said of his weekend getaway.

"I used to think that adventure was only for people who had trained for years. But this was not so difficult. And so much fun," he added.

Noted adventurer and Vice-President of Adventure Tour Operators' Association of India (ATOAI) Mandip Singh Soin said that both adventure tourism and the general acceptance for adventure sports are growing in the country, especially over the weekends.

"Adventure sports facilities are mushrooming all over the country and in many adventure activities, like bungee, the tourist doesn't need any training or skills and can just enjoy as a passenger. This allows even a weekend traveler to get an adrenaline rush," Soin said.

According to Soin, while traditional



Options for adventure sports are plenty in India. (Clockwise from top right) Scuba diving in Maharashtra; Snorkelling in Maharashtra; White water river Rafting in Kullu, Himachal; Horse race in Spiti, Himachal; Camping near Chobia Pass in Himachal.

adventure activities like trekking or mountaineering remain the bedrock of Indian adventure tourism, new, "passenger" activities are fueling growth in this sector.

"Newer adventure activities such as hot-air ballooning, canyon swinging and ziplining cater to the larger section of unskilled adventure tourists, fueling the rise of adventure tourism," he said.

Olivier Baudouin agrees that skill is no longer a barrier for the people who want to feel the thrill of adventure. A French national, he is the dive station in-charge at Andaman-based Barefoot Scuba.

"We even have a course for people who do not know how to swim," Baudouin said. "In the four years since I came here, the number of tourists has increased very rapidly," he added.

Even the high cost, which was once the main consideration, is no longer a barrier with youngsters having higher disposable incomes, according to S. Swami of Team4Adventure, a trans-



Himalayan adventure tour operator.

"We run a 14-day rafting expedition in the Brahmaputra river in Arunachal Pradesh. This expedition costs \$1,867 per participant, but the number of Indians taking it is increasing," he said.

However, even these adventure activities have an inherent quota of risk. And even the most experienced adventure enthusiasts can make a mistake. According to Soin, ATOAI had revised the security guidelines sent the suggestions to the Ministry of Tourism. The new, upgraded guidelines are expected to come into effect within a couple of months.

"The new guidelines will make it mandatory for the operators of these facilities to install the required safety measures in order to get a license," he added.

Soin said ATOAI was also in dialogue with states on the matter, especially on the installation of rescue stations with medical facilities, satellite phones and airlift facilities.

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■ By the light of the silvery moon...



A view of the full moon in the Indian sky on May 5, when the full moon coincided with its perigee — its closest approach to Earth — and became the year's biggest. (AFP Photo)

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Texas 77007

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