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Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee arriving in Parliament to present the federal Budget, 2012-13, in New Delhi on March 16.

## Indian Budget seeks to drive growth recovery, stimulate investment

■ **FOURTH BRICS  
SUMMIT HELD IN  
NEW DELHI**

■ **U.S. SECRETARY OF  
COMMERCE JOHN BRYSON  
VISITS INDIA**

■ **AMBASSADOR  
NIRUPAMA RAO MEETS  
MAYOR VINCENT GRAY**



Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee at a photo-op before presenting the General Budget 2012-13 in Parliament in New Delhi on March 16. To his right is Minister of State for Finance Namo Narain Meena.

# India to advance investment, cut subsidies, recast tax regime

Federal Budget 2012-13 aims to improve macroeconomic environment and strengthen domestic growth drivers

**W**ith an assurance that there were clear signs of an economic recovery in India, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee on March 16 presented the Federal Budget for 2012-13, with a promise to advance investment, cut subsidies and recast the entire tax regime.

“The global crisis has affected us. India’s gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to grow at 6.9 percent in 2011-12, after having grown at 8.4 percent in each of the two preceding years,” the Finance Minister said in his opening remarks in Parliament while presenting the Budget. GDP growth was expected to be around 7.6 per cent in 2012-13, he said.

The Finance Minister said though the global crisis had affected India, the country remained a front runner in

economic growth. The slowdown was primarily due to deceleration in industrial growth, he said. While headline inflation had remained high for most part of the year, the Finance Minister expressed hope that it would moderate in the next few months and remain stable thereafter.

The ₹4,909,250 million (\$300 billion) federal budget identified five key objectives: Focusing on domestic demand-driven growth recovery; creating conditions for rapid revival of high growth in private investment; addressing supply bottlenecks in agriculture, energy and transport sectors (such as coal, power, highways, railways and aviation); intervening decisively to address the problem of malnutrition; expedite coordinated implementation of decisions being taken to improve delivery systems, governance,

and transparency and address the problem of black money and corruption in public life.

## REVENUE EXPENDITURE

Referring to the growth of revenue expenditure, particularly subsidies, the Minister said that from 2012-13, while subsidies related to food and for administering the Food Security Act would be fully provided for, all other subsidies would be funded without adversely affecting the economy. The government would try to restrict expenditure on central subsidies to under 2 percent of the GDP in 2012-13 and over the next three years, bring it down to 1.75 percent. A mobile-based Fertilizer Management System, to be introduced this year, has been designed to provide end-to-end information on movement of fertilizers and

subsidies, he said. Subsidies would be transferred to the retailer and eventually to the farmers in subsequent phases, benefiting nearly 120 million families of farmers.

## TAXES

**Tax Receipts:** In the budget estimates for 2012-13, the gross tax receipts are estimated at ₹10,776.12 billion, an increase of 15.6 percent over the estimates and 19.5 percent over the revised estimates for 2011-12. After devolution to states, the net tax to the federal government in 2012-13 is estimated at ₹7,710.71 billion. The non-tax revenue receipts are estimated at ₹1,646.14 billion and non-debt capital receipts at ₹416.50 billion. The total expenditure for 2012-13 is budgeted at ₹14,909.25 billion.

The tax proposals are guided by the need to move towards the Direct Tax Code (DTC) in the case of direct taxes and Goods & Services Tax (GST) in the case of indirect taxes.

**Income Tax:** The Budget exempts individual income of up to ₹200,000 from income tax. In 2011-12, income up to ₹180,000 was exempt from tax. Income above ₹500,000 and up to ₹1 million will now attract tax at the rate of 20 percent. Senior citizens without any income from business now need not pay advance tax.

**Corporate Tax:** While no changes have been made in corporate taxes, the Budget proposes several measures to promote investment in specific sectors. In order to provide low-cost funds to some stressed infrastructure sectors, withholding tax on interest payments on external commercial borrowings (ECBs) is being reduced from 20 percent to 5 percent for 3 years. These sectors include power, airlines, roads and bridges, ports and shipyards, affordable housing, fertilizers and dams. Investment-linked deduction of capital expenditure in some businesses has been raised to 150 percent from 100 percent. These sectors cover cold chain facilities, warehouses for storing foodgrains, hospitals, fertilizers and affordable housing. Container freight and warehousing for storage of sugar



## Budget allows airlines to access foreign funds

To help address concerns of the Indian civil aviation sector, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee has said domestic airlines could borrow up to \$1 billion in external loans for a period of one year. He also curtailed customs duty on aircraft parts. "To address the immediate financing concerns of the civil aviation sector, I propose to permit external commercial borrowings (ECB) for working capital requirement for the airline industry for a period of one year subject to a ceiling of \$1 billion," Minister Mukherjee said while presenting the Budget for 2012-13 in Parliament.

ECB is a mode used by the government to help Indian corporations and public sector undertakings access foreign funds.

Minister Mukherjee further proposed to exempt the maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) sector from basic customs duty on aircraft parts, tyres and testing equipment.

According to the Finance Minister, the government was considering the proposal for allowing foreign carriers to invest up to 49 percent in the domestic carriers.

will also be eligible for investment-linked deduction.

The budget also proposes weighted deduction for research and development expenditure, agri-extension services and expenditure on skill development in the manufacturing sector.

**Service Tax:** The Finance Minister also sought to widen the service tax base, strengthen its enforcement, and

bring it closer to central excise. A common simplified registration form and a common return form are being introduced for central excise and service taxes. All services will now attract service tax, except those in the negative list. The negative list has 17 heads and includes specified services provided by government or local authorities, and services in the fields of education, renting of residential dwellings, entertainment and amusement, public transportation, agriculture and animal husbandry. A number of other services, including healthcare and services provided by charities, independent journalists, sportspersons, and performing folk and classical artistes, are exempt from service tax. The film industry also gets tax exemption on copyrights relating to recording of cinematographic films. Service tax rate is being increased from 10 percent to 12 percent, with consequential change in rates for services that have individual tax rates.

**Net Tax Gain:** While direct tax proposals in the budget will result in a net revenue loss of ₹45 billion, indirect taxes will result in a net revenue gain of ₹459.40 billion. Thus, the tax proposals will lead to a net gain of ₹ 414.40 billion.

## AVIATION

The Finance Minister proposed to permit external commercial borrowing for working capital requirements of the airline industry for a period of one year, subject to a total ceiling of \$1 billion. He said that a proposal to allow foreign airlines to participate up to 49 percent in the equity of an air transport undertaking was under consideration.

## AGRICULTURE

The Budget proposed a ₹202.08 billion (an 18 percent increase) plan outlay for the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation while the outlay for the agricultural development plan has been increased to ₹92.17 billion. The target for agricultural credit was raised to ₹5,750 billion, representing an increase of ₹1,000 billion over the tar-

## Key highlights of Budget 2012-13

- Budget identifies five objectives related to growth, investment supply bottlenecks, governance and removing malnutrition
- Fiscal deficit targeted at 5.1 percent of GDP, as against 5.9 percent in revised estimates for 2011-12
- Federal government debt at 45.5 percent of GDP as compared to 13th Finance Commission target of 50.5 percent
- Central subsidies to be kept under 2 percent of GDP, to be further brought down to 1.75 percent of GDP over the next three years
- ₹300 billion to be raised through disinvestments
- Efforts to reach a broad-based consensus on FDI in multi-brand retail
- Investment in 12th plan in infrastructure to go up to ₹50 trillion, half of which is expected from private sector
- Target for agricultural credit raised to ₹57.50 trillion
- Income tax exemption limit raised from ₹180,000 to ₹200,000; upper limit of 20 per cent tax slab raised from ₹800,000 to ₹1 million
- Standard rate of excise duty raised from 10 per cent to 12 per cent; service tax rates raised from 10 percent to 12 percent

get for the current year. In order to improve the outreach of the food-processing sector, a new centrally sponsored scheme, National Mission on Food Processing, would be started in cooperation with the states, the Minister added.

### DEFENSE

The Budget has expanded military spending by over 17 percent to ₹1,934.07 billion. In real terms, this increase amounts to ₹289.92 billion in the total outlay for defense for 2012-13 compared to ₹1,644.15 billion for the previous year. The Finance Minister also announced a raise in the capital expenditure of the armed forces to ₹795.79 billion, a 15.7 percent hike from the previous year's capital allocation of ₹691.99 billion.

### DISINVESTMENT

The Finance Minister said the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) were being given a level-playing field vis-à-vis the private sector in practices such as buybacks and listing on stock exchanges. Stating that in 2011-12, the government would raise about ₹140 billion from disinvestment as against a target of ₹400 billion, he proposed to raise ₹300 billion through disinvestment in 2012-13. He said that at least 51 percent ownership and

management of CPSEs would remain with the government.

### BONDS AND SHARES

The Finance Minister proposed to allow Qualified Foreign Investors (QFIs) access to the Indian corporate bond market. He also proposed simplifying the process of Initial Public Offers (IPOs). The minister proposed to provide ₹158.88 billion for capitalization of public sector banks, regional rural banks and other financial institutions including NABARD.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

During the Twelfth Five-Year Plan period, investment in infrastructure is

expected to go up to ₹50 trillion (approximately \$1,112 billion) with half of this expected to come from the private sector. In March, the country also launched its First Infrastructure Debt Fund with an initial size of ₹80 billion. In addition, tax-free bonds of ₹600 billion will be allowed for financing infrastructure projects in 2012-13. The government has also approved a harmonized master list for the infrastructure sector.

### CUSTOMS DUTY

The budget offers relief to different sectors of economy, especially those under stress. Import of equipment for fertilizer projects are fully exempted from basic customs duty of 5 per cent for 3 years. Basic customs duty is also lowered for a number of equipment used in agriculture and related areas. In infrastructure, customs relief is being given to power, coal and railways sectors. While steam coal gets full customs duty exemption for 2 years (with the concessional countervailing duty of 1 per cent), natural gas, liquid natural gas and certain uranium fuel get full duty exemption this year. Different levels of duty concessions are provided to help mining, railways, roads, civil aviation, manufacturing, health and nutrition and environment. To help modernize the textile industry, a number of equipment are fully exempted from basic customs duty. Customs duty is raised for gold bars and coins of certain categories, platinum and gold ore.



A view of one of the lounges of the Delhi International Airport, one of the world's top international airports. The Budget envisages over \$1,000 billion worth investment during the 12th Five-Year Plan.

# India to grow at 7.6 percent, play active global role: Economic Survey

Challenges include raising infrastructure and building human capital



Chief Economic Adviser Dr. Kaushik Basu addressing a press conference after the Economic Survey was presented by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee in Parliament in New Delhi on March 15.

India's economic growth would rebound to 7.6 percent in 2012-13 on the back of softening inflation and better industrial production, enabling it to play an active role on the world stage and influencing international trade, capital flows and governance of global financial institutions, the Economic Survey 2011-12 has said.

The Survey, tabled by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee in Parliament on March 15, projected 8.6 percent expansion in the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2013-14.

"Economic growth is expected to remain at 7.6 percent, plus or minus 0.25 percent, in 2012-13 and it will improve further to 8.6 percent in 2013-14," said Chief Economic Adviser Dr. Kaushik Basu.

The economy is estimated to expand 6.9 percent in the current financial year ending March 31, he added.

The Survey said inflation would remain in the range of 6.5-7 percent by the end of March. It projected a further moderation in inflationary pressure in 2012-13.

Inflation in the current fiscal has largely been driven by high food prices. It had slipped to a low of 6.6 percent in January, but rebounded to

almost 7 percent in February. The Survey, however, said fiscal consolidation was the only way to keep inflation down. "But despite the low growth figure of 6.9 percent, India remains one of the fastest growing economies of the world as all major countries including the fast growing emerging economies are seeing a significant slowdown," the Survey noted.

According to the Survey, industrial

production is likely to improve in the coming financial year. The Survey also called for allowing foreign direct investment in multi-brand retail and reducing subsidies, especially on diesel.

As the country enters the 12th Five-Year Plan from April 1, the Survey observed that the challenges before it included laying a sound foundation with major initiatives for building infrastructure, building human capital, and eradicating poverty and malnutrition.

A flagship annual document of the Ministry of Finance, the Economic Survey reviews the developments in the Indian economy over the previous 12 months, summarizes the performance on major development programs, and highlights the policy initiatives of the government and the prospects of the economy in the short to medium term. The Economic Survey is presented to both houses of Parliament during the Budget Session.

## Railway Budget focusses on upgrade of infrastructure

The Railway Budget, presented in Parliament on March 14, sought to raise investment in modernization and upgrade of rail infrastructure. The budget, with the highest-ever plan outlay of ₹601 billion, provides ₹68,720 million for new railway lines and significant funds for passengers safety, security and amenities.

The budget focussed on five important fields: safety; consolidation; decongestion & capacity augmentation; modernization; and bringing down operating ratio from 95 percent to 84.9 percent in 2012-13.

### Key highlights of Railway budget 2012-13

- 75 new express trains, 21 new passenger services trains proposed
- 137 new sub-urban services to come up in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata
- 725 km new railway lines to be introduced
- A green train and 200 Green Energy Stations proposed
- Special coaches for differently-abled persons
- Emphasis on infrastructure development — 5 focus areas identified
- 19,000 km rail tracks to be modernized
- Mission-mode approach for rail modernization
- Minor increase in passenger fares
- A slew of passenger amenities being introduced



Heads of the BRICS countries (L to R) President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, President Dmitry Medvedev of Russia, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, President Hu Jintao of China and President Jacob Zuma of South Africa pose prior to the BRICS Summit in New Delhi on March 29.

## **BRICS to set up joint bank, promote investment**

At the fourth BRICS Summit in New Delhi, the leaders of the five-nation group called for measures to promote sustained and balanced global economic growth

**T**he BRICS nations — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — at a summit held in New Delhi on March 29 have resolved to explore the setting up of a joint development bank to promote mutual investment in infrastructure, primarily in emerging economies and developing economies. This, along with the pact they signed to spur trade in their local currencies, was a major outcome of the BRICS Summit themed “BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Security and Prosperity”.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Presidents Hu Jintao (China), Dmitry Medvedev (Russia), Dilma Rousseff (Brazil) and Jacob Zuma (South Africa) ended the fourth BRICS summit by renewing the call for

reforming global governance institutions and closer coordination on global issues. The BRICS nations comprise nearly half the world’s population and a growing share of global GDP. Stressing on the need to restructure the world order to accommodate emerging economies and developing countries, the five leaders called for a sustained and balanced global economic growth.

“While some progress has been made in international financial institutions, there is lack of movement on the political side. BRICS should speak with one voice on important issues such as the reform of the UN Security Council,” said Prime Minister Singh.

“We are committed to stepping up exchanges with other countries on global economic governance reforms

and increasing representation of developing countries,” said President Hu Jintao while calling for enhancing political trust through increased dialogue.

BRICS includes two veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council — Russia and China — and three members aspiring for a permanent seat — India, Brazil and South Africa.

The BRICS leaders also called for greater voting rights for developing countries in the IMF.

In a renewed assertion, BRICS called for implementation of the 2010 governance and quota reform before the 2012 IMF/World Bank annual meeting as well as a comprehensive review of the quota formula to better reflect economic weightages.

The BRICS nations decided to

explore the possibility of creating its first institution in the form of a South-South Development Bank that would mobilize “resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries”, the BRICS’ Delhi Declaration said.

The leaders directed their finance ministers “to examine the feasibility and viability of such an initiative, set up a joint working group for further study and report back by the next summit”.

The development banks of the five countries signed two pacts, including a master agreement on extending credit facility in local currency and a BRICS multilateral letter of credit confirmation facility agreement, which could help scale up bilateral trade from \$230 billion to \$500 billion by 2015.

The BRICS leaders welcomed candidatures from the developing world for the position of the President of the World Bank and backed “an open and

merit-based process” for the selection of the World Bank and IMF heads.

Pledging support for the United Nations system the Delhi Declaration noted, “Considering UNCTAD to be the focal point in the UN system for the treatment of trade and development issues, we intend to invest in improving its traditional activities of consensus-building, technical cooperation and research on issues of economic development and trade. We reiterate our willingness to actively contribute to the achievement of a successful UNCTAD XIII, in April 2012.”

The five countries said dialogue was the only way to resolve the Iranian and Syria issues. “We agreed that a lasting solution in Syria and Iran can only be found through dialogue,” Prime Minister Singh said.

The Delhi Declaration added, “We envision a future marked by global peace, economic and social progress and enlightened scientific temper. We

stand ready to work with others, developed and developing countries together, on the basis of universally recognized norms of international law and multilateral decision making, to deal with the challenges and the opportunities before the world today.”

Marking the emergence of the BRICS as a powerful pressure group for developing countries in global politics, the BRICS leaders called for speedier resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the creation of an independent Palestine co-existing with Israel and backed greater regional and international cooperation for the stabilization of Afghanistan. The summit adopted an ambitious multi-layered action plan and identified new areas of cooperation that include multilateral energy cooperation within the BRICS framework, a general academic evaluation and future long-term strategy for BRICS, a BRICS Youth Policy Dialogue, and cooperation in population-related issues.



Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh speaking at the BRICS Summit in New Delhi. Also seen (L-R) are Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna, Commerce Minister Anand Sharma and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission of India, Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

## Highlights of the Delhi BRICS Summit

*(As reflected in the Delhi Declaration)*

- **Global governance reforms:** Pitches for reform of global governance institutions, including the UN, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.
- **IMF, World Bank posts:** Backs a “merit-based selection-process” for the heads of the IMF and the World Bank.
- **Global economic recovery:** Supports closer coordination for balanced and sustained global economic recovery.

- **Intra-BRICS trade:** Results in Development Banks of BRICS countries signing two pacts for boosting intra-BRICS trade. BRICS to set up Exchange Alliance, a joint initiative by related BRICS securities exchanges.
- **Development Bank:** Agrees to explore the setting up of a BRICS-led South-South Development Bank. It will promote mutual investment and fund infrastructure projects in BRICS and developing countries.
- **Iran:** Backs dialog to resolve the Iranian nuclear impasse.

- **Syria:** BRICS voices “deep concern” over Syria and calls for “an immediate end to all violence and violations of human rights” and backs a Syrian-led political process.
- **Arab-Israeli conflict:** Backs speedier resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the creation of an independent Palestine co-existing with Israel.
- **Doha Round:** To step up joint efforts for successful conclusion of the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations.
- **Climate change:** Backs green economy and stands for closer coordination on global climate change negotiations.
- **Action Plan:** Adopts an all-encompassing action plan that includes, among other things, meetings of foreign ministers on sidelines of the UN and meetings of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors on sidelines of G-20 meetings/other multilateral meetings.
- **Areas of Cooperation:** To identify new areas of cooperation that includes multilateral energy cooperation within BRICS framework, a general academic evaluation and future long-term strategy for BRICS; BRICS Youth Policy Dialogue; and cooperation in population related issues.

# Ambassador Nirupama Rao meets Mayor Vincent Gray



Ambassador Nirupama Rao with Mayor of the District of Columbia Vincent Gray on March 8.

**I**n a meeting with the Mayor of the District of Columbia, Vincent Gray, on March 8, Ambassador Nirupama Rao said India and the District could look to greater cooperation in the field of education in the larger context of the India-U.S. bilateral relations, where both countries had made “excellent progress” in advancing their goals. Touching on business relations, the Ambassador

referred to the gamut of India’s commercial relationship with the United States, including investments made by Indian companies in 43 states of the United States and the consequent job-creation in those states.

Welcoming the Ambassador, Mayor Gray expressed keen interest in deepening cooperation between the District and India, and hoped that more Indian companies would be drawn to the District for their investment plans.

Ambassador Rao extended an invitation to Mayor Gray to visit India during which the two sides could explore the possibility of establishing closer linkages. The Mayor said he looked forward to such a visit at a mutually convenient date. Present at the meeting were Natwar Gandhi, Chief Financial Officer of the District of Columbia, and Cynthia Brock-Smith, Secretary of the District of Columbia. 

## Indian IT Industry a key element of India-U.S. relationship: Rao

**A**t an event at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington, DC, Ambassador Nirupama Rao and NASSCOM President Som Mittal launched a report, titled ‘India’s Tech Industry in the U.S.’ on March 22. The report details the contributions of the Indian IT industry to the U.S. economy, such as creating jobs in American states, enhancing the competitiveness of U.S. businesses and carrying out corporate social responsibility tasks in cooperation with local communities.

In her remarks at the launch of the report, Ambassador Rao observed that the Indian IT industry was one of the “key constituents and stakeholders in the rapidly growing India-U.S. relationship, and was committed to seeking long-term technology partnerships with U.S. businesses that were mutually beneficial”. With the growth of the India-U.S. Strategic Partnership, the willingness of the Indian IT firms to imbue it with concrete commercial underpinnings had also grown, she added.

## ‘Hispanic community an important partner’

**W**elcoming a group of Congressional Hispanic Caucus members to a dinner reception on March 20 at her residence in Washington DC, Ambassador Nirupama Rao described America’s Hispanic community “as an important partner in India’s relations with the United States with the ties between the two countries becoming increasingly multifaceted and multidimensional”.

In her remarks, partly delivered in Spanish, Ambassador Rao highlighted the importance of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus as a “representative body for an important group of constituents in the United States that showcased the plurality of American society”. Those attending the reception included Congressmen Ruben Hinojosa and Silvestre Reyes from Texas, and Congresswoman Grace Napolitano and Congressman Jim Costa from California.



Ambassador Nirupama Rao with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus on March 20.

Ambassador Rao also gave the members of the Caucus a brief overview of the present state of the global strategic partnership between India and the United States, highlighting their shared values and converging interests, and referred to the vast canvas of bilateral cooperation.

Speaking on behalf of the

Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Congressman Silvestre Reyes thanked Ambassador Rao for her hospitality and for organizing the interaction between the Embassy of India and the Caucus. He echoed Ambassador Rao’s observation that the India-U.S. strategic partnership “offered a pillar of stability amidst many uncertainties”. 

# 'Foremost task of India's foreign policy is to enable domestic transformation'

Speaking at the Hudson Institute on 'Indian Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities' on March 22, Ambassador Nirupama Rao pointed out that India's strategic goals were basically meant to enable a qualitative transformation within by accelerating growth and pursuing a mode of strategic autonomy that safeguarded the national interest at all times.

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

"The foremost task of India's foreign policy is to enable the domestic transformation of India. And by this we mean making possible the transformation of India's economy and society while promoting our values of pluralism, democracy and secularism. This requires us to work for a supportive external environment that is peaceful, thus enabling us to concentrate on our growth and development. At the broadest level, our

foreign policy seeks security and support from the international community as we build and transform our society and economy.

In terms of geography, India's foreign policy has always regarded the concept of neighborhood as one of widening concentric circles, around a central axis of historical and cultural commonalities. From this point of view, it has always given due priority to the development of relations with the countries of Asia. An article of steadfast faith in our foreign policy, has been to ensure a peaceful, secure and stable neighborhood, so as to safeguard peace, security and development within our own borders, and it is with this perspective that India is developing a mutually beneficial relationship with all her neighbors.

Looking beyond Asia, we have tried to build mutually beneficial ties with all the major powers, foremost among which is the United States. Our relationship with the United States is in fact built on our shared values and

converging interests. It is based on our fundamental belief that we have mutually beneficial stakes in each other's success. We have in the last decade, set up a comprehensive architecture of engagement based on broad political support in each of our countries, strong people-to-people linkages, and a growing habits of cooperation. Over the past ten years, the two governments have put in place a very robust agenda of cooperation for our partnership that is, to quote Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, founded on both 'principles and pragmatism'.

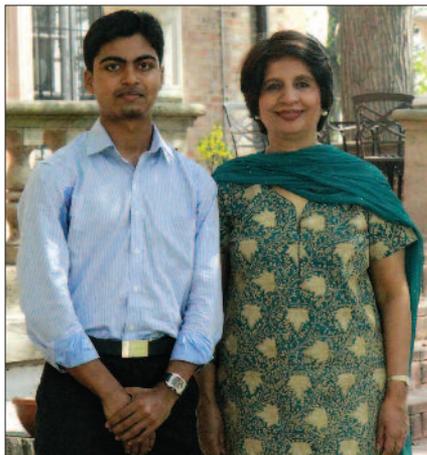
The overseas Indian communities have been natural partners in India's growth and development."

*The full text of Ambassador Nirupama Rao's speech can be viewed at: <http://www.indianembassy.org/prdetail1892/address-by-ambassador-nirupama-rao-at-the-hudson-institute-on-andquot%3BIndian-foreign-policy-in-the-21st-century%3A-challenges-and-opportunitiesandquot%3B>*

## Ambassador congratulates YouTube Space Lab winner

The winner of the YouTube Space Lab 2012 from the Asia-Pacific region, and one of the six global winners of this competition, Sachin S. Kukke, called on Ambassador Nirupama Rao on March 23 and shared his experience of conceptualizing and carrying out innovative scientific experiments. At the meeting, Sachin, a student of mechanical engineering at the BMS College for Engineering in Bangalore (India), was accompanied by Lee Hunter, Head of Brand Marketing for YouTube, and Claudio Lilienfeld, Senior Policy Manager for Asia Pacific at Google.

Warmly congratulating Sachin for his achievement, Ambassador Rao remarked that in India "students like Sachin symbolize the hopes and the



Ambassador Nirupama Rao with Sachin S. Kukke, the winner of YouTube Space Lab 2012.

potential of a dynamic, resurgent India and its young population". She encouraged Sachin to pursue his goals

and interests in the specialized area of aerospace engineering and wished him a bright future.

Sachin's experiment explores the transfer of heat in ferrofluid — a special liquid that is magnetized when subjected to a magnetic field.

The study can benefit development of advanced cooling and heat transfer systems.

Ambassador Rao was delighted to learn that nearly 40 percent of the total number of entries came from India alone.

YouTube and Lenovo, in cooperation with Space Adventures, NASA, ESA (European Space Agency), and JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency) had announced YouTube Space Lab challenge in October 2011.

## Embassy hosts introduction of Sumit Ganguly's 'India since 1980'

The Embassy of India hosted a book introduction and discussion of *India Since 1980* by its author

Prof. Sumit Ganguly, Rabindranath Tagore Chair in Indian Cultures and Civilizations at Indiana University,

Bloomington, along with panelists Gautam Adhikari and Jonah Blank on March 22.



1. Ambassador Nirupama Rao addressing the audience.
2. Dr. Sumit Ganguly reading from his book.
3. Panelist Gautam Adhikari speaking on contemporary India.
4. Panelist Jonah Blank presenting his views on contemporary India.
5. Guests in attendance.

## Columbia University Alumni Club briefing

The Embassy hosted a briefing by Ambassador on India and India-U.S. relations on

March 23 for members of the D.C. based Columbia University Alumni club. The attendees included mem-

bers of the federal and state government, the administration, business professionals and scholars.



1. Ambassador Nirupama Rao addressing the gathering.
2. Sukumar Dwarkanath, President, Columbia University Club of DC, speaking on the occasion.
3. Sadanand Dhume, Columbia University Alumnus & Resident Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, speaking on the occasion.
4. A cross-section of guests in attendance.

# A journey in search of self...

New Delhi-born Indian-American artist Anil Revri is well known for his expression of profound themes of philosophy of culture through images, employing geometric designs and abstractions. His exhibitions have traveled far and wide — to India, Europe and the United States. He enchanted art lovers in the Washington, DC area with *Faith and Liberation through Abstraction* — his interfaith project comprising drawings, paintings and sculpture — at the American University Museum (Katzen Arts Center) from January through April, 2012.



Artist Anil Revri at the Embassy on January 28, 2012.

**Excerpts from an interview with the noted artist:**

**Q:** Your exhibition *Faith and Liberation Through Abstraction* has attracted considerable attention in the DC area. How did it come about and what was your vision while conceptualizing your artwork and the exhibit itself?

**Anil Revri:** Jack Rasmussen, Director and Curator of the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, offered me a show in 2009.

At that time, I had just started the *Ram Darwaza* series of paintings. Our initial plan was to show ten paintings from this series along with eighteen smaller works on paper. However, it wasn't until a year later, when I received Donald Kuspit's essay *Faith and Liberation Through Abstraction* written for the occasion, that I began to rethink the exhibition in terms of a multi-disciplinary, site-specific project.

As 2011 also marked the tenth anniversary of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the title and timing of the show provided a great opportunity to design a conceptual exhibition that addressed the urgent need for religious tolerance in pluralistic societies within the framework of geometric abstraction.

**Q:** Could you provide some more

thoughts on the underlying themes of the exhibition?

**Anil Revri:** The lessons of secularism that I learned during my childhood in New Delhi ten years after India's Partition are deeply ingrained in my psyche and find their way into my work.



**Left:** Cultural Crossings 6, Suite I 1998–2001: Mixed media on Arches paper (30.48 X 22.86 cm): Collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art; **Above:** Pages from a Manuscript 4, 2011: Mixed media on handmade paper (30.48 X 22.86 cm);

*Faith and Liberation Through Abstraction* is designed to stimulate interfaith dialogue at the grassroots level. It comprises

thirty-seven drawings, paintings, and sculpture created in the last fifteen years. These contemporary compositions have been created using the word Ram in Devanagari script as well as scriptures in their native languages from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism.

Artistically, this exhibition also marks an important personal milestone. It is the first time I have created a site-specific conceptual sculpture using LED technology. Each horizon-

tal band of text highlights scriptures related to peace from the aforementioned religions that scroll across the entire surface of the unit ad infinitum.

**Q:** Describe in your words the response of the larger American audience to your exhibition. How would you compare the reaction of the Indian-origin audience, if

at all any different?

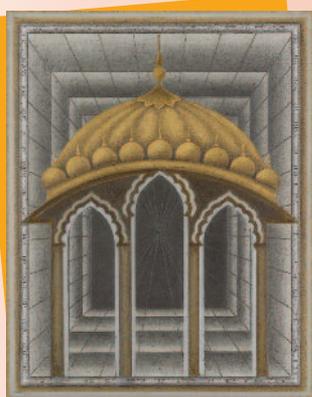
**Anil Revri:** The overwhelming response in favor of the exhibition by Indians, Americans, critics and the audience in general has been humbling. Furthermore, it is reassuring to learn that the vast majority of people prefer non-violent and peaceful resolutions to conflict.

**Q:** You are an Indian-American artist. How has your affiliation to both cultures influenced your work?

**Anil Revri:** The work is a visual record of my journey in search of the self. The different phases and stylistic shifts may be considered as stops along the way.

**Q:** How would you rate the level of contemporary art in India and the resonance it enjoys internationally?

**Anil Revri:** Indian artists have been creating great works for a long time. While it is certainly not the only reason, it would be incorrect to discount the fact that the eyes of the world, for now, are turned to India owing to its economic success.



## CGI New York hosts Holi celebrations



Consul-General Prabhu Dayal greeting the guests on the occasion of Holi celebrations at the Indian Consulate, New York.



Consul-General of Trinidad & Tobago Rudrawatee Nan Ramgoolam addressing the gathering on the occasion.



The Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations, Ambassador Milan Meetarbhan, speaking on the occasion.

**H**oli, the festival of colors, heralding the arrival of spring in India, was celebrated at the Consulate General of India in New York on March 9. Nearly 150 guests from the Tri-state area graced the fun-filled event. Among them were dignitaries, artistes, academicians, members of cultural associations, and mediapersons. The event was held in the Ballroom of New India House which resonated with traditional Holi songs.

Greeting the guests, Consul-General Prabhu Dayal spoke about the secular traditions of India. “We at the

Consulate celebrate all national festivals that bring about social cohesion, not only in India, but also the world over,” he said, adding that the Consulate had become a cultural hub for Indian-Americans living in the Tri-State area.

The event was attended by Consul-General of Trinidad and Tobago Rudrawatee Nan Ramgoolam; Consul-General of Guyana Brentnold F. R. Evans; and the Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations, Ambassador Milan Meetarbhan.

Describing how Holi was celebrated in their countries, the dignitaries in

their remarks, said the festival was “an indispensable event that brought about fraternity and cohesion amongst the various sections of society”.

Holi signified the arrival of spring and rejuvenated people’s spirits, with the celebrations being marked by “spectacular color, music and dance”, they added.

The rituals and practices observed in their respective countries and as described by the speakers proved how “Indian traditions have been preserved and nurtured amongst the diaspora through the course of time”, many guests observed. 

## ‘India Pavilion’ at International Boston Seafood Show-2012

**A**t the International Boston Seafood Show 2012 held at the Boston Convention Center from March 11-13, India’s nodal seafood promotional Agency, Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) displayed an array of seafood products at the India Pavilion.

MPEDA has been participating in the Show for the last 10 years. This year, MPEDA had six co-exhibitors: Dish Hospitality Pvt Ltd, West Coast Frozen Foods Pvt Ltd, Gadre Marine Exports Pvt Ltd, Seven Seas Exports Pvt Ltd, Surya Mitra Exim Pvt Ltd and Shree Datt Aquaculture Farms Pvt. Ltd. Dish Hospitality, won the 2012 Seafood Excellence Award for



(L-R): The ‘Indian Pavilion’ at International Boston Seafood Show 2012; Consul-General Prabhu Dayal with MPEDA Chairman Leena Nair at the India Pavillion.



the second time in a row for their product ‘Oriental Shrimp Nest’ in the Best New Food Service category. Congratulating Dish

Hospitality on their success, Consul-General Prabhu Dayal also assured support for Indian seafood trade in the United States.

## 'Friends of India' Mission 2012 felicitated

The Consulate General of India, New York, organized a reception on March 5 at New India House in honor of the "Friends of India" Mission 2012, a delegation of 17 senior businesswomen from the New Jersey area. The delegation visited India in February 2012 in a show of solidarity to the Sheriff of Mumbai and their Indian sisters, representing diverse professional and business interests.

Prominent members of the Indian-American community, including businessmen, professionals, community leaders, and media personalities from the Tri-State area attended the function. Introducing the "Friends of India" Mission members to the audience, Consul-General Prabhu Dayal said the Mission would bring the people of the two countries closer to each other.



Consul-General Prabhu Dayal with members of the 'Friends of India' Mission 2012 delegation. **From L-R:** Aleksandra Lacka, Poonam Khubani, Daryl Rand and Jill Cohen.

Daryl Rand, the leader of the delegation, thanked the Consul-General for organizing the reception and spoke about the objective of the delegation's visit to India. Pointing out that it was the fourth Mission aimed at building solidarity with Indian businesswomen,

she said the program was designed to build linkages between women entrepreneurs of both countries and demonstrate support for India. The Mission has networked with 86 Indian businesswomen. The delegation facilitated exchanges between HR College of Mumbai and New

Jersey City University and provided scholarships to needy students, Rand added.

Poonam Khubani, convener of the "Friends of India" mission spoke about the evolution of the organization and its various activities. 

## CGI New York announces 'Open Day'



Consul-General Prabhu Dayal addressing the Press at New India House on March 28.

To help understand problems faced by Indian nationals and effectively address them, the Consulate General of India in New York has decided to have an 'Open Day' for a one-on-one interaction. Starting the first week of April 2012, the New York Consulate will meet Indian nationals every working Thursday between 2 pm to 4 pm, Consul-General Prabhu Dayal announced in a Press briefing at New India House on March 28.

The Consulate has designated an

officer for the interaction. The Open Day sessions would go a long way in sorting out problems faced by Indian nationals on issues relating to consular matters, notably those related to immigration, Consul-General Dayal pointed out.

Other outreach interventions (already in place for Non-Resident Indians and

People of Indian Origin), such as dedicated television programs and telephonic and email redress of queries, would, however, simultaneously continue, he said.

The Consul-General also announced that starting April 16, the passport services for the New York Consulate would be taken care of by VFS Global. The agency was selected based on a tender to implement the outsourcing of consular services at the Embassy of India and other Consulates in the U.S. 

## New website for CGI San Francisco



Consul-General N. Parthasarathi interacting with the media following the launch of the website.

To facilitate the large number of people seeking information related to visas, passports, OCI/PIO cards and other consular services, the Consulate General of India in San Francisco launched a newly designed user-friendly website on March 14. Ariel Quintos, the longest-serving employee of the Consulate, launched the website.

The initiative is in line with the Consulate's efforts to improve the delivery of services provided by the Consulate and through its outsourcing agency TRAVISIA. 

# Consul-General Arora calls on Governor of Texas

**S**anjiv Arora, Consul-General of India in Houston, called on Rick Perry, Governor of Texas, at the State Capitol in Austin on March 14. The meeting was marked by a useful exchange of views on a wide range of issues relating to cooperation between India and the State of Texas.

Consul-General Arora thanked Governor Perry for his “commitment to promoting friendship and cooperation between India and Texas”. There was vast potential for expanding collaborations in business, education,



Consul-General Sanjiv Arora with Governor of Texas Rick Perry in Austin on March 14.

research, healthcare and other areas, the two officials agreed.

Consul-General Arora pointed to India’s distinctive advantages as a business destination/partner and suggested that Governor Perry consider leading a business mission from Texas to India. Governor Perry responded positively to the suggestion of the Consul-General.

During their meeting, Governor Perry and Consul-General Arora hailed the achievements of the vibrant Indian-American community in Texas and the important role they played in fostering cooperation between the two sides.



Consul-General Sanjiv Arora with Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant at a function organized by the India Association of Mississippi at Jackson, Mississippi, on March 24.

## Consul-General’s engagements



Consul-General Arora with the alumni of the Indian Institutes of Management in the U.S. at their first Convention themed 'Blazing New Trails' at the University of St. Thomas in Houston on March 17.



Consul-General Arora with Mayor of Galveston Joe Jaworski on March 7.

Consul-General Arora with Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, who delivered a Keynote Address, highlighting the economic strengths and business potential of India, at the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH) on March 26. Judge Ed Emmett’s address was part of the Chamber’s Distinguished Lecture Series.



# India, U.S. reaffirm commitment to strengthen economic partnership

**C**ommerce, Industry and Textiles Minister Anand Sharma and United States Commerce Secretary John Bryson on March 26 reaffirmed their governments' commitment to further strengthen the India-U.S. economic partnership as an important element of the strategic relationship between the two countries, as outlined by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Barack Obama.

In their talks, Minister Sharma and Secretary Bryson expressed satisfaction at the "signs of recovery in economic growth and momentum in India and the United States". The two leaders emphasized the importance of a "sustained global economic recovery, a stable Euro Zone, stability in the international commodity and energy markets, and an open international trade environment for accelerating economic growth and enhancing prosperity in their countries".

The two leaders noted with satisfaction that bilateral trade in goods and services had exceeded \$100 billion, making the U.S. the largest trading partner for India, and India one of the fastest-growing markets for the United States. They welcomed the double-digit growth in trade between the two countries during the past two years, the rising flow of investments in both directions and the growing role of innovation in the India-U.S. partnership. The two leaders noted that growing ties in areas, such as infrastructure, aviation, defense, energy, higher education, financial services and information technology, had broadened bilateral economic ties. They welcomed the launch of the \$2-billion Infrastructure Debt Fund in India in March 2012, with the participation of Indian and U.S. financial institutions.

Minister Sharma and Secretary Bryson commended the contributions of the bilateral institutional mechanisms, especially that of the



Minister for Commerce & Industry and Textiles Anand Sharma with U.S. Secretary of Commerce John Bryson at a bilateral meeting in New Delhi on March 26.

India-U.S. Commercial Dialogue, to the admirable growth in bilateral economic ties in recent years. They hailed the important role the Commercial Dialogue and other bilateral mechanisms had played in providing opportunities for exchange of views with the private sector.

The two leaders welcomed the successful conclusion of the last round of the Commercial Dialogue, chaired by Commerce Secretary of India Dr. Rahul Khullar and Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Francisco Sánchez, in November 2011. They also agreed to extend the Commercial Dialogue until March 2014.

Minister Sharma and Secretary Bryson agreed that the Commercial Dialogue should "encourage and facilitate exchange of ideas, best practices and experiences in commercial issues between the two countries". This was especially relevant, "as both countries were seeking to bolster their national manufacturing base, driven by innovations and advanced technology".

Minister Sharma drew attention to

the significance of India's National Manufacturing Policy which aims to raise the share of manufacturing in the Indian economy and create employment opportunities.

In addition, India plans to set up National Investment and Manufacturing Zones (NIMZ) "as greenfield integrated industrial townships, which will open up enormous opportunities for technology collaboration and assimilation and investment by U.S. companies", he added.

The two leaders also agreed to launch a dialogue on sustainable manufacturing and another on enhancing cooperation in standards.

They directed their delegations to use the Commercial Dialogue to help "stimulate trade and investment ties across all areas, particularly in infrastructure, clean energy, agriculture and cold-supply chain".

Minister Sharma thanked Secretary Bryson for his visit and for bringing with him a high-level delegation of U.S. infrastructure companies. They agreed to continue their dialogue later in the year in Washington, DC. ■

# India formulating new air cargo promotion policy



(L-R) Boeing India President Dr. Dinesh A. Keskar, Petroleum Minister Jaipal Reddy, Civil Aviation Minister Ajit Singh and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.Kiran Kumar Reddy at the inauguration of the India Aviation-2012 show at Begumpet airport in Hyderabad on March 14.

**T**he government was formulating an economic regulatory framework for future airports as well as an air cargo promotion policy, Civil Aviation Minister Ajit Singh has said.

Inaugurating 'India Aviation 2012' in Hyderabad on March 14, he said domestic passenger traffic was expected to continue growing at 9-10 percent in the coming years.

"India is the fastest-growing civil aviation market in the world and by 2020 will be amongst the first three markets with about 420 million passengers being handled by the Indian airport system as against 140 million in 2010," he said.

"The Indian airspace will play host to nearly 3.2 million aircraft. This growth in India will also create exciting opportunities for the aerospace

industry in the region," said Minister Singh.

In order to attract foreign investors, India was allowing 100 percent FDI in greenfield airports under the automatic route to facilitate world-class airports, the minister said. "An appropriate economic regulatory framework for future airports is also being worked out to attract investment and ensure their viability."

Minister Singh said the cargo handled at Indian airports had seen "an impressive compounded annual growth rate of 10.9 percent during the last five years, with international cargo accounting for nearly two-thirds of the total cargo". He said the ministry was also formulating an air cargo promotion policy, which would soon be brought up for industry-wide consultations.

## Private airlines to have global traffic rights

**T**he government was considering plans to give traffic rights to private airlines on global routes to help them tide over their financial problems, Civil Aviation Minister Ajit Singh has said.

"Increasing international traffic rights can help private carriers eliminate some of their financial problems as international routes are more profitable," he said at the India Aviation 2012. The minister said about 500 to 600 new international flights would be opened to private carriers this year under bilateral agreements for new destinations such as Uzbekistan, Egypt, Ethiopia and Vietnam.

These bilateral agreements allow nations to operate international commercial air services within their territories.

Air India has only been able to use 30-35 percent of the total bilateral traffic rights available with India. "This year it will go up to 40 percent," said Minister Singh.

He added that a note on allowing private airlines to seek foreign direct investment had been moved and the Commerce Ministry was looking into it.

Over 200 companies from 18 countries participated in the third edition of the international conference and exhibition on civil aviation, jointly organized by the Government of India and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

"The growing interest in our flagship aviation event is a reflection of the fact that India is fast on its way to becoming an aviation hub in the near future with this air show," the minister said.

Minister Singh said India was uniquely placed to "offer enormous opportunities and potential for growth for aviation companies worldwide".

During the last decade, traffic carried by domestic airlines in India grew nearly six-fold from 13 million to around 60 million in 2011, he pointed out.



The Sukhoi 'Superjet 100' was showcased for the first time in India at India Aviation 2012 at Hyderabad.

# Indian-Americans win talent search contest

Indian-American teenager Nithin Reddy Tumma has won a \$100,000 award in the prestigious Intel Science Talent Search competition for his research in devising a more effective and less toxic breast cancer treatment.

Two other Indian-American finalists in the competition — Neel Patel from Florida and Anirudh Prabhu from Indiana — were placed sixth and seventh, respectively.

The winners overcame tough competition from a group of 40 finalists, seven of them Indian-Americans, in what has been described as one of the toughest science talent search com-

petition. All the finalists met with President Barack Obama at the White House on March 13.

Tumma, 17, from Michigan analyzed the molecular mechanisms in cancer cells and found that by inhibiting certain proteins, the growth of cancer cells could be slowed and their malignancy decreased.

Tumma is a varsity tennis player and a volunteer for the Port Huron Museum, where he has started a



Nithin Reddy Tumma

restoration effort for historical and cultural landmarks.

Patel received a \$25,000 award for studying how non-speech patterns of sounds called sonifications convey information. His research may lead to a computer-user interface that could be as revolutionary as the graphical interface when it was put to use 30 years ago.

Prabhu received a \$25,000 prize for his investigation into the odd-perfect number problem. His research suggests that such numbers do not exist.

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## Indian-run New Zealand firm designs UAV for cloud seeding

An Indian-promoted aviation company in New Zealand is developing what it claims to be the world's first unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) for cloud seeding.

The Auckland-based Apeiron Aerospace claims that the UAV tactical system developed by it is quite safe, as the existing process for cloud seeding involving manned aircraft endangers the lives of pilots.

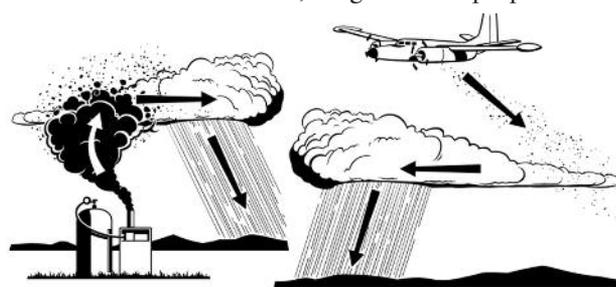
"There is a need for UAVs for cloud seeding. It is a question of the pilot's life. It becomes very difficult to control the aircraft in high turbulence," Apeiron Aerospace Director Sanjeev Rao said.

The firm, floated by Rao in 2011, exhibited its tactical system at India Aviation 2012 in Hyderabad on March 14. According to Rao, the design exhibited at the air show was a robust one.

The design was prepared six months ago, but a prototype is expected to be ready in another six to

eight months. It will then be flight tested, Rao said.

The company will come out with different variants of the UAV that could also be used for intelligence gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance. The price of a UAV ranges between \$500,000 and \$750,000 depending on the customer need, endurance, range and the propulsion.



Cloud seeding entails spraying small particles of silver iodide or dry ice into the sky in order to trigger precipitation.

The Apeiron UAV system, which includes both hand-launched and rapid response, can be used for applications like pipeline and agriculture monitoring, search and rescue, border and maritime patrol besides meteorological research and practice, and defense.

## MIT scientists address EmTech India in Bangalore

Noted scientists and researchers from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), including two Indian-Americans, participated in the fourth EmTech India, a conference on emerging technologies organized by MIT Technology Review at Bangalore on March 27 and 28.

Over 500 innovators participated in the event that covered areas such as digital transformation, network designs in the social world and the innovation ecosystem.

Keynote speakers on the first day of the event included George Westerman of MIT's Centre for Digital Business, Marie-Jose Montpetit of MIT Research Lab of Electronics and Shiladitya Sengupta of Harvard-MIT Division of Health Sciences and Technology.

On day two, discussions were held on the interplay between medical imaging, manufacturing inspection and video analytics; energy efficient systems in biology, engineering and medicine; and the emerging nervous system of ubiquitous sensing. The speakers included Brian Anthony of MIT's Engineering in Manufacturing Program, Rahul Sarpeshkar of MIT's Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and Joseph Paradiso of MIT Media Laboratory.

A session on 'Technology in Cricket' was also held to showcase some of the new advances in the field of cricket.

# More Indian-Americans named to key jobs

President Barack Obama has named two more persons of Indian origin to key posts in the U.S. administration.

While Indore-educated Paula Gangopadhyay was named Member, National Museum and Library Services Board, Bangalore-educated Sonny Ramaswamy was named Director, National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

“These dedicated individuals bring a wealth of experience and talent to their new roles and I am proud to have them serve in this Administration. I look forward to working with them in the months and years to come,” he said while announcing seven new appointments.

Paula is currently serving as the Chief Learning Officer at The Henry Ford and has held a variety of positions in education and arts policy.

Her key appointments include, Executive Director of the Plymouth Community Arts Council from 2006 to 2008; Curator at the Public Museum



Paula Gangopadhyay



Sonny Ramaswamy

of Grand Rapids from 2002 to 2006; and Executive Director of the Great Lakes Center for Education, Research and Practice from 2000 to 2001.

Paula Gangopadhyay received her

BA and MA from Indore University, and her post-graduate certification in archival, museum and editing studies from Duquesne University.

Ramaswamy is Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences at Oregon State University and Director of the Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station. Previously, he was Associate Dean of the Purdue University College of Agriculture and directed the university’s research programs from 2006 to 2009.

Prior to joining Purdue, he was Head of the Department of Entomology at Kansas State University from 1997 to 2006, where he held the title of Distinguished Professor. Ramaswamy received a BS and an MS in Entomology from the University of Agricultural Sciences in Bangalore, and a PhD in Entomology from Rutgers University. — IANS

## Rise of Indian-Americans in US media

With two governors, four billionaires and many holding key positions in government, Indian-Americans have emerged as major players in the media.

Take for instance, Indian-born Aparisim Bobby Ghosh, who was recently named by *Time* magazine as Editor-at-Large. In naming Ghosh,

Called “the most influential foreign policy advisor of his generation” by *Esquire* magazine, Zakaria hosts one of the most influential shows on American TV, *Fareed Zakaria GPS* on CNN every Sunday.

Equally ubiquitous is Sanjay Gupta, the multiple Emmy-award winning chief medical correspondent for CNN.

Vinnie Malhotra, a former program development executive at *ESPN* has just joined CNN as Senior Vice-President for Development and Acquisitions.



(L-R) Aparisim Ghosh, Fareed Zakaria, Sanjay Gupta, Rajiv Chandrasekaran

Managing Editor Richard Stengel called him “one of *Time*’s greatest assets”.

Then there is Fareed Zakaria, who too was introduced as Editor-at-Large of *Time* magazine in October 2010 after spending 10 years overseeing all of *Newsweek*’s editions abroad.

Similarly, Rajiv Chandrasekaran is National Editor of *The Washington Post*, where he has worked since 1994.

Today, hundreds of Indian-Americans bring Americans their daily news. Two decades ago, however, only a few of them commanded bylines. — IANS

## March 14 celebrated as Sikh Environment Day

As many as 1,007 Sikh institutions and gurdwaras around the world celebrated March 14 as Sikh Environment Day. It was on this day that nature and animal lover Guru Har Rai became the seventh Sikh Guru in 1644.

EcoSikh, a Washington-based Sikh organization, which had initiated the celebrations last year had set the goal of

### EcoSikh

enrolling more than 700 Sikh institutions and gurdwaras to celebrate the day this year as compared to 450 last year. This year it also included schools and Sikh-owned businesses.

Dr. Rajwant Singh, President of EcoSikh said: “It is perhaps the largest direct action ever by Sikhs for the environment ever in history. Guru Har Rai’s life has inspired so many individuals to lead efforts at local levels in India and all across the globe to take meaningful actions dedicated to this day.” — IANS



The East-West corridor of Bangalore Metro, also called Namma Metro, was inaugurated on October 20, 2011.

# Insights into Infrastructure

**W**ith the development of urbanization and increased involvement of foreign investments, different segments of infrastructure sector in India have witnessed rapid growth in recent time. The Government of India has taken various steps to develop infrastructure in the country. Liberalization of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) regulations, extended tax holiday periods and introduction of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) are some of the major factors that have led to the growth of this sector in India.

Major Infrastructure development requires a substantial inflow of investment capital. The policies of the government seek to encourage investments in domestic infrastructure from both local and foreign private capital.

## Roads

India has the world's second largest road network, aggregating over 3.34 million kilometers (km) and account

for 65 per cent of freight and 80 per cent of passenger traffic, according to the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI).

The Government of India estimates that approximately US\$90 billion investment would be required during 2007-2012 financial years to improve the country's road infrastructure. Plans have been announced by the government to increase investments for the development of road infrastructure in the country and the government would increase funds from around US\$15 billion per year to over US\$23 billion during 2011-12 for the same.

Recently, the Ministry of Finance approved six road proposals worth approximately US\$1.8 billion under public-private partnership (PPP). The Public Private Partnership Approval Committee (PPPAC), chaired by Economic Affairs Secretary R Gopalan, has granted approval to the six proposals of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways spread across five states.

## Railways

The Indian Railways have generated US\$8.1 billion of revenue earnings from commodity-wise freight traffic during April-November 2011 as compared to US\$7.5 billion during the corresponding period in 2010, registering a rise of 9 per cent. It carried 618 million tonnes of commodity traffic during the six months as compared to 593 million tonnes carried during the corresponding period in 2010, registering a rise of 4 per cent.

The World Bank has signed a US\$975 million loan agreement with the Government of India to set-up the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor that will allow faster and more efficient movement of raw materials and finished goods between the Northern and Eastern parts of India.

Furthermore, the Delhi Metro is finally moving towards eight-coach trains. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation signed a deal to procure 76 coaches from Bombardier. The 76 coaches will be used to operate the first

eight-coach trains on the HUDA city center-Jehnagirpuri corridor in May 2013. Additionally, the Asian Development Bank would extend loans of up to \$500 million to Indian Railways to help improve its services along some of the busiest freight and passenger transport routes.

## Ports

Maritime Transport is critical for the social and economic development of a country. India enjoys a vibrant port sector comprising 12 major ports and 176 notified non-major ports. India ranks 16th among the maritime countries and has one of the largest merchant shipping fleet.

## Power

The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) has set up a renewable energy fund (REF) to promote renewable energy projects in India. This fund is meant for compensating states in case they fail to meet the target as per the renewable energy (RE) projects schedule.

IBM's India Software Lab in Bangalore has just contributed towards

a system to run data centers on solar power, and is making it commercially available, perhaps the first such commercial offering in the world.

## Investment

The Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure has approved the project of four laning of Vijayawada-Machilipatnam section of National Highway-9 in Andhra Pradesh under the National Highway Development Programme phase IV-A. According to a statement, the total cost of the project is estimated at \$140.01 million.

Solar projects developer SunBorne Energy has tied up with European company Eoxis Energy as a partner in its Gujarat project. With this, Eoxis has

earned 49 per cent equity in SunBorne's 15 MW solar photovoltaic (PV) project in Gujarat. The overall cost of the project is about US\$ 42.80 million.

Gujarat-based Atlanta Transformers and Electricals has tied up with TWBB of China for US\$76.09 million project in order to produce high voltage power transformers and reactors plant at Vadodara in Gujarat, as per a State Government release.

## Government Initiatives

In order to provide "Power for All" by 2012, the Government of India plans to meet the country's energy requirements by adding 78,000 mega watt (MW) of installed generation capacity to the existing capacity by the end of 2012.

To promote power generation from biomass, the Government of India is planning to set up a national bio-energy mission for the 12th Five-Year-Plan, which will require a suitable regulatory environment for large-scale capital investments in biomass-fired power stations. India has a surplus of 150 million tonnes of biomass, which could be utilised to produce 16 giga watts (GW) of power. The national bio-energy mission aims at the enhancement of biomass energy in industries besides offering logistics and infrastructural assistance to biomass processing plants in rural areas. The national bio-energy mission will also initiate a GIS-based National Biomass Resource Atlas to map potential biomass regions in the country.

*To promote power generation from biomass, India is planning to set up a national bio-energy mission under the 12th Five Year Plan*

## Road Ahead

The Infrastructure sector in India is evolving today. Government initiatives coupled with investments that are flowing into this sector provide a tremendous opportunity for growth. Apart from Government initiatives, PPP projects could also pave the way for the growth of this sector. It's imperative that the nation prepares itself for the future and the next anticipated growth curve.

(Courtesy: India Brand Equity Foundation)



Built at a cost of \$ 31.5 billion, all the eight lanes of the Rajiv Gandhi Sea Link in Mumbai was opened to traffic in 2010.

## A DREAM COMES TO LIGHT

Joining the growing list of Indian-American filmmakers, IT professional Kiran Meegada together with Arun Rudra, recently released their first film, *My Heart is Beating... Adola*. Besides being the debut venture for the directors and the lead cast, the film is also the first Telugu movie shot entirely in the U.S. and released in India.

Written by Rudra, the film explores how two individuals deal with life's inhibitions while attempting to express their emotions to each other. The film was released in India on February 24, following an audio launch in January 2012 with renowned Telugu film industry producer D. Suresh Babu.

Produced by K. Raj, *My Heart is Beating... Adola* was released at Worldgate Theatre in Herndon, Virginia, in March 2012 and since then has received requests for screening in various cities across the US.

Co-director Kiran Meegada expressed his satisfaction in completing a "dream project", noting that the movie might hopefully have had "paved way for many more creative



Telugu film industry producer D. Suresh Babu (left) with director Kiran Meegada at the film's audio launch.

hearts and heads in the U.S. to follow the path", which he said was a good sign and could be the trend-setter for new writers, technicians and actors to pursue their dreams and join the Telugu film industry.

## Avoid pitfall of doing central parts: Shabana tells Vidya

Shabana Azmi liked Vidya Balan's performance in Sujoy Ghosh's *Kahaani* so much that she could see glimpses of herself in Vidya. At the same time, she feels the young actress should avoid the pitfall of accepting only central parts.

"Somewhere I feel Vidya has made the daring but right career choices. I see glimpses of my own involvement with my roles in Vidya Balan," said Shabana appreciatively after watching Balan in *Kahaani*.

Shabana is currently busy playing a wily politician in Rajkot for Vishal Bhardwaj's *Matru Ki Bijlee Ka Mandola*. She took time off from her shooting schedule to watch Sujoy Ghosh's masterpiece.

"I had to watch *Kahaani* because of Vidya. I was bowled over by her performance. As an actor, I could see she was making all the right moves throughout the film. There was not a single artificial note in her performance," said



Shabana Azmi



Vidya Balan

Shabana, known for powerful performances in *Arth*, *Masoom*, *Fire* and *Godmother*.

But Shabana sounds a note of caution in the euphoria surrounding Vidya's rise to the top.

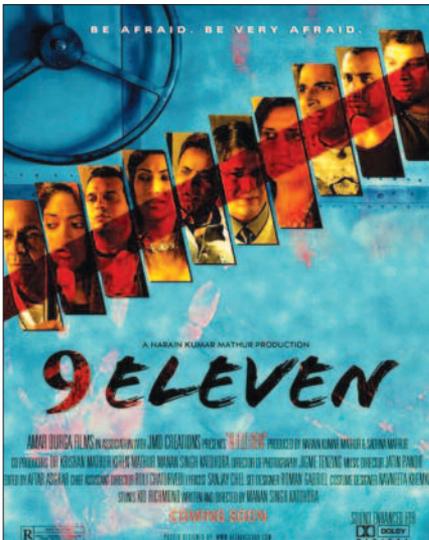
"If she continues to dominate her films, she might very soon face a scarcity of co-stars. Heroes might be apprehensive about being

paired with her," said the 61-year-old who faced similar situations when films featuring her in the central roles co-starred Vinod Mehra or Marc Zuber.

In *Kahaani*, Vidya found the Bengali star Parambrata Chatterjee sportingly supporting her heroine-centric presence in the film. But would she run out of co-stars in her future ventures?

"Vidya should avoid the pitfall of only doing central parts. She should also enjoy doing peripheral parts as much as the pivotal ones. Being the center of attention could be addictive. She must also learn to be part of a cinema that doesn't focus on her but has something important to say," suggested Shabana.

# Indian-American filmmaker wins 2012 'Rising Star' award



Indian American filmmaker Manan Singh Katohora has won the “2012 Rising Star Award” for his feature film *9 Eleven* at the Canada International Film Festival.

Held in Vancouver, British Columbia, the festival brings the very best of World Cinema from over 90 countries around the world. It is dedicated to the creation of opportunities for the artistic interaction and exchange among independent filmmakers and the film-going community.

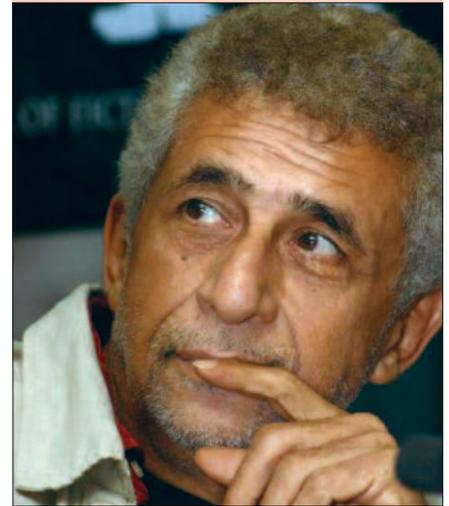
Written and Directed by Katohora, *9 Eleven* portrays the life of 10 people who belong to different walks of life.

Though each individual has achieved a measure of success in their individual lives, their darkest secrets come out in the open when all of them are given some time for introspection, when they meet each other in a bizarre twist of events.

The film *9 Eleven* is a fast paced thriller with undertones of terrorism.

Kashmera Shah features in an item number composed by *Dilwaale Dulhania Le Jaayenge* fame music director Jatin Pandit.

## Naseer teams up with son Vivaan for *Mastaan*



Naseeruddin Shah

Veteran actor Naseeruddin Shah has teamed up with his younger son Vivaan for *Mastaan*. While the former will play gangster Karim Lala, the latter will feature as young Haji Mastan in the movie going on the floors in May.

The \$4 million budgeted *Mastaan* will be set in the 1980s. This is Naseer and Vivaan's second film together after *7 Khoon Maaf* though they didn't share any screen space in the film.

In *Mastaan*, however, the father-son have extremely critical dramatic scenes together. The film will be directed by first-timer Rocky Khanna.

Producer Sunil Bohra said that it had to be Naseer for the older part and Vivaan for the younger role.

“Rocky was clear on that. If we didn't get Naseer saab and his son we wouldn't make the film. Luckily they both agreed,” he said.

Vivaan has begun preparations for his role as Haji Mastan, however, he has been asked not to watch Amitabh Bachchan in *Deewaar* and Ajay Devgn in *Once Upon A Time In Mumbai*.

The director doesn't want Vivaan to bring any baggage into his part.

“The only thing I knew about Rocky Khanna is that he had written the lyrics of a film called *Main Meri Patni Aur Woh*. I had no clue he could write a script or direct a film. But when I heard the script of *Mastaan*, I was blown away,” Bohra said.

## Emraan wants action film with strong script

Actor Emraan Hashmi, who started his career with action film *Footpath* and moved on to romance and drama films, says he would love to go back to the genre, provided he gets a film with a strong story and character.

“I would want a character-driven action film,” said Emraan.

“Generally action-driven films are low on story. I personally would like to do films where from point A to point Z there is a well-etched character and a good script. Definitely if it's an action film, it has to be a good script,” he added.

The 32-year-old actor feels that it's important for action filmmakers to strike the right balance between the story and stunts.

“Action films are high on stunts, spectacle and grandeur and that's the way it should be. But I would want the best of both worlds. I would want the grandeur, I would want the spectacle in the action film and as well as a very good character-driven plot and a good story,” he added.

The actor spoke on the sidelines of the

music launch of his next film *Jannat 2*. Directed by Kunal Deshmukh, *Jannat 2* also features Esha Gupta, Randeep Hooda and Imran Zahid.

He will also be seen with his *The Dirty Picture* co-star Vidya Balan once again in a comedy film titled *Ghanchakkar*. Emraan is confident that the film will break the mold about the genre.

“*Ghanchakkar* is a comedy film, but I want to call it just a comedy film because there are certain pre-conceived notions about comedy and this film will break all of those.

“At the same time, you will be on the floor in the film. It's a very funny film with some thrilling moments and suspense,” Emraan said.

Besides *Jannat 2*, Emraan is currently busy with projects like *Raaz 3D* and *Shanghai*.



# WHERE THE SEA DISAPPEARS



A view of Chandipur beach in Odisha

**H**ave you seen the sea disappear in front of your eyes? If not, then come to Chandipur beach in the eastern Indian state of Odisha. Here the sea recedes by as much as five kilometers every day offering an opportunity to the visitor to literally walk into the sea.

One of nature's many wonders, the sea recedes massively from the beach when on the ebb and returns during high tide to fill the emptiness thus created. Seeing the sea play hide-and-seek twice a day is an unforgettable experience.

Chandipur is about 200 km from Bhubaneswar, the capital of the state. A train connects Bhubaneswar with Balasore, the railhead closest to Chandipur, at a distance of 10 km. From there, one can travel by road that passes through a verdant landscape. Adding to the peaceful ambiance are the swaying casuarina trees and the solitary sand dunes, with the constant hum of the waves as they rise and fall gently.

The beach supports a varied range of biodiversity. It's not rare to find a horseshoe crab or red crab crawling beside you.

The beach is not very well known

among tourists who usually flock to the nearby beaches at Puri or to those at the temple destination of Konark.

"My wife and I saw the sea disappear before our eyes. We walked about four kilometers into the sea and returned with the high tide," Anirban Mukherjee, a tourist from the nearby state of West Bengal, said.

"It was like returning with the sea. The path we took was through the massive void left behind by the receding waters, it was as if we had walked into the sea. This beach is not like the other beaches," said his wife Arpita.

There are some who prefer riding a bike into the sea.

When asked if it was dangerous to ride a bike onto the sea bed with the impending high tide, Dasarath Dash, who sells coconuts on the beach, answered in the negative.

"Depending on the moon, the tide's timings keep changing. It's mostly the locals, familiar with the timings, who take their bikes into the sea. The others are thrilled just to even walk that distance," Dash said.

"In any case, the sea is not rough here. The waves are gentle," he said.

Food is another plus point here. For those who love seafood, the place offers plenty, especially fresh prawns.

Chandipur is also well known for its proximity to the Defence Research and Development Organization's (DRDO) Integrated Test Range. A number of missiles have been launched from here, including Akash, Agni, Shaurya and Prithvi ballistic missiles.

To make a night halt, there are some small-budget hotels, with a tariff range of \$10-\$49 per day, and a government guesthouse in Chandipur. One can also opt to stay in nearby Balasore.

"The best time to visit Chandipur is during the winter, between November and March, and most tourists come during this time," Dash said.

The tourism department has also been trying to promote Chandipur and other nearby spots as tourist destinations. An elaborate beach festival, showcasing the art and culture of the state, has become an annual affair and takes place every February.

"I hope a proper infrastructure can be put in place so that the Chandipur beach attracts more tourists, it will be to the benefit of the local residents and the economy. The number of foreign tourists is still very low compared to Puri," said Ubachan Mohanty, a local resident.

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## ■ Ushering in the New year



Women dressed up to celebrate 'Gudi Padwa', the Maharashtrian New Year, in Mumbai on March 23. (AFP Photo)

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