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Indian Ambassador to the US Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar with US President Barack Obama at the Oval Office of the White House on March 10.
Photo: The White House

Ambassador presents his credentials to President Obama

■ INDIA TO EMERGE
LARGEST AVIATION
MARKET IN THE WORLD

■ INDIAN MEDIA TO
GROW 14.2 PERCENT,
SAYS A CII STUDY

■ GOOGLE OFFERS
INDOOR MAPS IN
INDIA

Ambassador presents credentials to US President

Ambassador of India to the United States, Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar presented his credentials on March 10 to the President of the United States of America (USA) Barack H. Obama at the Oval Office of the White House.

President Obama warmly welcomed Ambassador Jaishankar to Washington and wished him success in his responsibilities as India's next Ambassador to the United States. The President said that US and India could accomplish a lot together.

Ambassador Jaishankar, in his remarks to President Obama, conveyed warm greetings from the President and the Prime Minister of India to him and Mrs. Michelle Obama. Ambassador Jaishankar assured President Obama of his commitment to expand key pillars of the bilateral relationship including economic relations and trade ties, defense and security, energy, science and technology and global issues. ■■



Indian Ambassador Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar with President Barack Obama. Photo: The White House

Ambassador welcomes US move to include more Sikh in military

Ambassador of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar welcomed the bipartisan Congressional letter issued on March 10, 2014 to the U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel urging the Department of Defense to promote inclusion of Sikh community members in the U.S. Armed Forces by modernizing appearance regulations that allow them to wear turbans and maintain beards.

The letter is authored by Congressmen Joe Crowley (D-NY) and Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), and signed by over a hundred Members of Congress.

In a statement following the letter's release, Ambassador Jaishankar said, "The Congressional initiative is an important step towards upholding the cultural and religious rights of the Sikh community in the United States.

The large number of signatories to this letter testifies to the important role played by the Sikh community in the United States and its various

THE LETTER WAS ISSUED TO US SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CHUCK HAGEL URGING HIM TO PROMOTE INCLUSION OF SIKH MEMBERS IN THE US ARMED FORCES BY MODERNIZING APPEARANCE REGULATIONS THAT ALLOW THEM TO WEAR TURBANS AND MAINTAIN BEARDS.

walks of life. The Sikh community's success in the United States is a source of pride for India and a pillar of the India-U.S. partnership."

Speaking of the contributions of the Sikh community in India, Ambassador Jaishankar noted, "India takes pride in being the cradle of Sikhism. The Sikh community is an intrinsic part of India's multi-religious and pluralistic fabric. Sikhs have made India proud with their sacrifices, achievements and leadership. India's Sikh sons and daughters have held the highest offices in the land and have served at the highest ranks including at Four Star ranks in the Indian military. The tremendous progress and prosperity they have achieved, and their enormous contribution to their motherland, speak volumes about their indefatigable spirit of enterprise and diligence." ■■

Photo album of Ambassador's meetings



1. Ambassador Dr. S. Jaishankar with Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida on March 3.
2. Ambassador with Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut on March 5.
3. Ambassador with the CEOs of Indian companies in the U.S. at a round table meeting of the CII India Business Forum at the Embassy on March 27.
4. On March 28, the US welcomed an Indian delegation to discuss India-U.S. relations with a specific focus on East Asia. The Indian Delegation included MEA Joint Secretaries Guatam Bambawale, Vikram Doraiswami, Ambassador Dr. S. Jaishankar and DCM Taranjit Singh Sandhu. The delegation was met on the U.S. side by Assistant Secretary Russell, Assistant Secretary Biswal and Admiral Lockler. (Photo: U.S. Department of State)
5. Ambassador Dr. S. Jaishankar meeting with House Minority Whip, Congressman Steny Hoyer of Maryland on March 30.

India-US energy dialogue meeting

India and the United States affirm that both countries have a strong commitment to collaborating on energy and promoting greater technological innovation

The India-U.S. Energy Dialogue was held in New Delhi on March 11. The Dialogue was co-chaired by Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, and Dr. Ernest Moniz, Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy.

The Energy Dialogue is part of the broader Indo-U.S. Strategic Dialogue. The Energy Dialogue was launched in May 2005 with the last meeting held in September 2012 in Washington DC. Secretary Moniz led the U.S. delegation comprising of senior officials from the Department of Energy and various national laboratories.

At the end of the meeting, India and the United States affirmed that both countries had a strong commitment to collaborating on energy and promoting greater technological innovation, scientific collaboration, trade, research and development, deploying environment-friendly technologies and products, and promoting sound regulatory frameworks to deliver energy solutions for sustainable growth.

Officials from the two sides held meetings from March 5 to March 11 and reviewed the full range of cooperation under the U.S.-India Energy Dialogue.

The co-chairs of the dialogue, Dr. Ahluwalia, and Secretary Moniz discussed progress made by the working groups in renewable energy and new technologies, cooperation in shale gas, LNG imports, energy efficiency and low carbon technologies.

The members from the U.S-India virtual Joint Clean Energy Research and Development Center (JCERDC) also highlighted their progress in solar, advanced bio-fuels, and energy efficiency research projects under PACE-R, a unique program for funding joint research by Indian and US institutes.

In the year 2009, the U.S. and India



Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia with Dr. Ernest Moniz, US Energy Secretary during the meeting.

agreed to significantly increase collaboration under the Partnership to Advance Clean Energy (PACE) for deployment, research and developments in clean energy.

The PACE program has already mobilized public and private resources to support clean energy research and accelerate the deployment of clean energy technologies, policies and practices among others.

The India-U.S. Dialogue is an ongoing program, and new initiatives such as forecasting air conditioning demand, improving efficiency for space cooling and the PEACE (Promoting Energy Access through Clean Energy) initiative were launched in 2013.

In their concluding remarks, the two

co-chairs expressed satisfaction at the progress made in the energy sector through the co-operative process.

They directed the members of the working groups to continue their efforts, especially in the newer areas of mutual interest. Dr Ahluwalia briefed the Secretary, Energy about the India Energy Security Scenarios, 2047 and presented him a copy of the document.

The Planning Commission Deputy Chairman asked the U.S. side to study the hypotheses of this energy scenario-building exercise, and welcomed any comments on it.

The US Energy Secretary thanked the Deputy Chairman for hosting the U.S. energy team, and looked forward to collaboration between the two countries.

US-India business successes highlighted

Economic successes of three US corporations in India and three Indian companies in the US were highlighted at an event organized on Capitol Hill



The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) on March 27 hosted several members of Congress, business executives, and friends of India for a packed event, “Success Stories in the U.S.-India Partnership” on Capitol Hill. The event highlighted the economic successes of three U.S. corporations in India and three Indian companies in the US.

House India Caucus Co-chair Representative Joseph Crowley (NY) offered remarks along with Congressmen Pete Olson (TX), Ami Bera (CA), and Rick Nolan (MN).

Indian Ambassador to the US Dr. S. Jaishankar delivered the keynote address and Kapil Sharma, Senior General Manager, Tata Sons moderated a panel discussion with representatives from the featured corporations Essar Americas, Flex Films (USA), Mahindra USA, Corning, Gilead, and Ford Motor Company.

Congressman Crowley opened with praise of Ambassador Jaishankar’s tenure thus far in his new capacity and with congratulations to the people of India on the upcoming elections.

“815 million people partaking in this great democratic experiment is a marvel to behold. People from all walks of life have a chance to shape the direction of India and we wish India well in this process,” the Congressman said.



Above: Seated from left: Madhu Vuppuluri, Chairman, CII India Business Forum USA and CEO, Essar Americas; Rep Joe Crowley (NY), Co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans; Dr. S. Jaishankar, Ambassador of India to the US; Rep Pete Olson (TX); Ron Somers, President, USIBC and Rep Ami Bera (CA). Below: A section of the audience

Ambassador Jaishankar said he was optimistic about the future of the India-U.S. partnership. He pointed out that trade investments have grown three times since 2005.

The panel discussion featured Madhu Vuppuluri, CEO, Essar Americas; Steve Biegun, Vice President, International Government Affairs, Ford Motor Company; Mani Iyer, President, Mahindra USA; Clifford Samuel, Vice President, Access Operations and Emerging Markets, Gilead; Pradeep Tyle, CEO, Flex Films (USA) Inc.; and Deb Waggoner, Director Global Government Affairs, Corning.

Each of the panelists outlined the success story of their company and how it embodies the potential that exists within the partnership.

Essar has major investments in mining in Minnesota and is prepared for

that investment to go above \$3 billion if state permits come through.

Mahindra recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of their U.S. operations. With investments in California, Georgia, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas, Mahindra has created 3000 jobs in the US.

Mahindra also has very successful corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in universities and local communities.

Gilead has collaborations with 15 drug manufacturers in India with licenses to provide Gilead medicines in resource-constrained countries. Flex Films (USA) has operations in Kentucky to manufacture flexible packaging and Tyle appreciated the effective streamlining of the permitting processes from the state government. Corning just opened an optical fiber facility in Maharashtra.

Inauguration of painting exhibition ‘Akshara’

On March 22, the Gandhi Memorial Center in association with the Embassy of India inaugurated an exhibition called Akshara by Shanthi Chandrasekar.

Shanthi Chandrasekar has been drawing and painting since early childhood and recently has added sculpting and Tanjore painting to her creative repertoire. Many of her works are influenced by her Indian heritage, but her true inspiration comes from the mystery and majesty of the world around her. Her muse and her heart live where the scientific and spiritual overlap.

Best-known for the vibrancy of her work, her artistry includes a diverse media: oils, acrylics, colored pencils, pen and ink, string, paper, wood, clay, soapstone, and alabaster. Shanthi is also well known for her unique insight and creative depiction of the confluence of science and art.

Shanthi Chandrasekar’s works have been displayed in various locations throughout the Washington D.C. area. She has received numerous awards for her paintings as well as her sculptures. Shanthi is a teaching artist with the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, Maryland.

The exhibition is a collection of paintings depicting the relation between the sounds and symbols of the languages of South Asia.

In the exhibition, Shanthi tries to investigate the shapes of the letters in relation to the dominant culture and its origins. She focuses on the shapes of the letters of the alphabets rather than copying texts. She uses vowels and consonants to represent the dichotomy between the Shiva (male) and Shakthi (female) and the richness this combination brings about within the language.

This exhibition will remain on display through the end of April.



Shanthi Chandrasekar (artist) speaks about the inspiration behind her AKSHARA exhibition of paintings on the occasion of the exhibit inauguration at the Gandhi Memorial Center jointly presented with the Embassy of India on March 22. She spoke of her Tamil Nadu origins and surrounding community of scientists from all over India and her lifelong interest in discovering the origin and development of ancient and modern Indian scripts.



Shanthi Chandrasekar (artist) lighting the ceremonial lamp to inaugurate the Akshara painting exhibition presented by the Gandhi Memorial Center and Embassy of India. Also seen are Srimati Kamala, President and Carrie Trybulec, Director, Gandhi Memorial Center.

Deputy Chief of Mission meets AAHOA President



Deputy Chief of Mission Taranjit Singh Sandhu with Fred Swartz, President of Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) during the Association’s Annual Convention in Philadelphia on March 21.
(Photo: Jay Mandal/On Assignment)

CGI NEW YORK

Monthly lecture series: Media India: 2014-15



Clockwise from left: (L-to R) Salman Rushdie, Suketu Mehta, Tunku Varadarajan and Amb. Dyaneshwar M Mulay; Suketu Mehta; Tunku Varadarajan and a section of the audience during the event at Consulate General of India, New York.

On the evening of March 21, the Consulate General of India, New York kicked off Media India: 2014-15 — a monthly lecture-series — at the Consulate’s ballroom. Consul General of India in New York.

Ambassador Dyaneshwar M. Mulay in his opening remarks said that these conversations were aimed at discussing India’s global image, identity, aspirations, role and projection and related themes aimed at mainstream media, university students, youth and second generation Indian Americans.

The Consul General highlighted other initiatives like “State-by-State” being taken by the Consulate to intro-

duce the diversity and vibrancy of Indian states.

The distinguished speaker Mr Suketu Mehta, author and thinker who is working with Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute, New York University talked on India & US: Traffic of Ideas.

In his presentation, Mehta praised centuries old traditions in India of debate and discourse and India’s continued long democratic tradition.

Mehta also explained that in today’s world there need not be ‘one home’ as there is more human mobility than ever.

The event was moderated by Tunku Varadarajan, Professor at the City University of New York’s

Graduate School of Journalism. In the ensuing question and answer session, a good number of questions were answered by Mehta.

The event was attended by renowned author Salman Rushdie; Digambar Bhouraskar, former Director of United Nations and writer of *United Nations’ Development Aid: A Study in History and Politics*; Kaydor Aukatsang, representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for North America along with many educationists and students from New York University, PACE University, Queens College whose participation during the Question-Answer-session made the session lively and informative.

Community reception for Ambassador

In the evening of March 12, the Consulate General of India, New York; GOPIO International and Community Reception Committee hosted a community reception at the Consulate's ball-room for Dr. S. Jaishankar, India's Ambassador to the USA, and Mrs. Kyoko Jaishankar. A large number of the members of Indian community from New York and the tri-state area attended the reception.

Consul General, Amb. Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay welcomed the guests and introduced Ambassador Dr. Jaishankar to the audience.

The newly-elected assemblyman of New Jersey state assembly Raj Mukherjee welcomed the Ambassador. The New Jersey assemblyman and Deputy Speaker Upendra Chivkula also expressed happiness over Ambassador's visit to the region. Ashook Ramsaran, President of GOPIO International also addressed the gathering.

Ambassador Jaishankar during his remarks thanked the Indian-American community for its invaluable contribu-



The Consulate General of India, New York hosted a community reception for Ambassador Dr. S. Jaishankar, and Mrs. Kyoko Jaishankar.

tions towards India-US relations. He talked about the achievements of various Indian American in numerous fields in the US. He also appreciated the contribution of the Indian

American community towards India's social and economic development. Ambassador Jaishankar thanked the Consulate and the Indian community for hosting him.

'Connect India & USA'

On March 18, the Consulate General of India, New York organized a presentation titled "Connect India & USA in 2014" at the consulate's ball-room. The focus of the presentation was the development of business relations between India and the USA. CG Amb. Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay in his opening remarks emphasized the need for better connection between the two countries. He also invited young members of Indian-American as well as American community to work together for building co-operative relationships and partnerships.

Keith Zandler, CEO & Founder of The Cspace, Michigan outlined his efforts to connect India and USA through his innovative idea and technology available to the users on this web-space Cspace. Govind S. Sovale illustrated the technology. Ms Shyamala Desai associated with the NGO PREM briefed about the organizations who have already joined the initiative.

CGI HOUSTON



Above: Consul General P Harish attended as Guest of Honor for Sabbath Worship Service in the tradition of the Jews of India conducted by Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism on February 21. Right: Consul General P Harish meeting with US Congressman Blake Farenthold (R-TX:27th District) during his visit to Corpus Christi on March 19.

CGI CHICAGO

CG meets Congressman Peter Roskam

Consul General Dr. Ausaf Sayeed, had a meeting with Congressman Peter Roskam (R-IL) in his office in West Chicago on March 10. The discussions between the two sides covered areas like strengthening bilateral relations between India and the US in the fields of economy trade, commerce and investments. Roskam showed deep interest in various facets of India, including economy and the forthcoming Parliamentary elections and fondly recalled his last visit to Bengaluru. Peter Roskam is the co-chair of the Congressional Caucus of India and Indian Americans for the 113th Congress.



Consul General Dr. Ausaf Sayeed with Congressman Mr Peter Roskam (R-IL)

CG joins Parsi community during Navroz festival



Consul General Dr. Ausaf Sayeed joined the Zoroastrian (Parsi) community in Chicago in the celebrations of Navroz festival at the invitation of Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago. The Consul General lauded the numerous achievements of the Parsi community in India in various fields.

Open House session at the consulate



Consul General's Open House session with Indian and Indian-American community

An interactive 'Open House' session was organized by the Consulate with members of the Indian and Indian-American community on February 1 at the premises of the Consulate General of India, Chicago.

The Consul General and senior diplomats were present during this interactive session.

A number of outstanding issues on community welfare, trade and consular activities were discussed during the session.

CG addresses 'Connect India' event



Consul General Dr. Ausaf Sayeed delivered the keynote address at the 'Connect India' event organized by the India Association of Minnesota (IAM) on March 22.

The Consul General's speech focused primarily on international

trade, bilateral relation between India and US with a special focus on Minnesota and diaspora's role in enhancing economy of both the nations.

The Consul General also interacted with Sean Nelipinath, Chairman and CEO of the India Chamber of

Commerce and other Indian-American businessmen of Minnesota during his visit. The Consul General also addressed a Town Hall meeting at the Hindu temple organized by the Hindu Society of Minnesota (HSMN) and interacted with the Indian expatriate community. 

Midwest trade delegation visits India for Medical Fair

Illinois's Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity sent delegation to participate in the Medical Fair that was held in Mumbai, India from March 14-16.

Medical Fair India is India's premier trade fair for hospitals, health centers and clinics.

The healthcare market in India is among the most flourishing service sectors of the Indian subcontinent and has been the focus of both private and governmental entities.

Held annually, alternating between New Delhi and Mumbai, the Medical Fair provides a good platform to tap the enormous opportunities in the Indian healthcare market. 

Ambassador meets editorial board of The Chicago Tribune

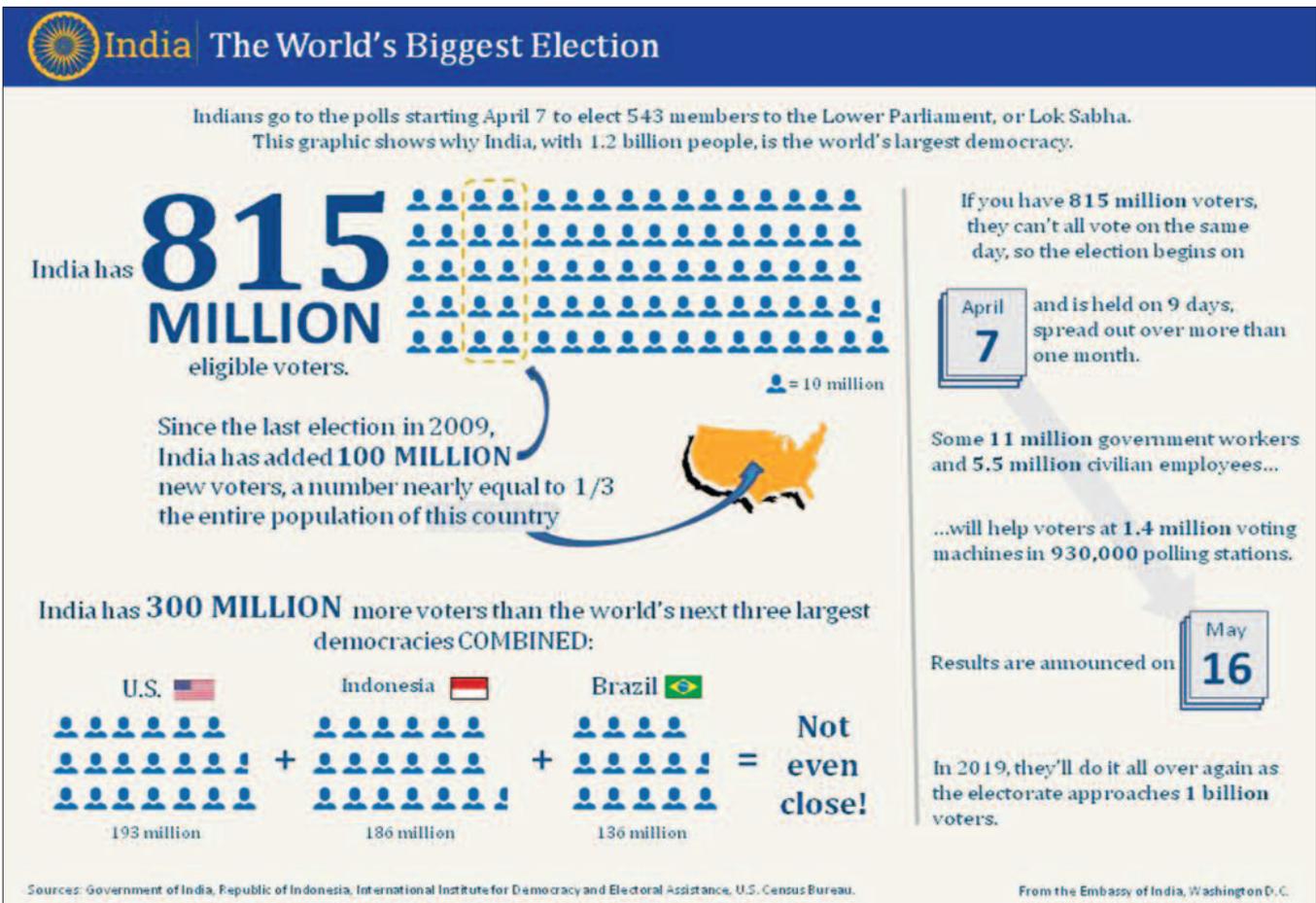
Ambassador Dr. S. Jaishankar along with Consul General and other officials attended an interactive session with members of the editorial board of *The Chicago Tribune*. The Ambassador touched upon a wide gamut of issues ranging from foreign policy to trade and economic affairs of India during the discussion. *The Chicago Tribune* congratulated India on complete eradication of polio from the country. 

CG speaks on foreign policy at UIC

Consul General Dr. Ausaf Sayeed addressed the students at University of Illinois Chicago as part of Allan Learner Lecture series on foreign policy organized by International Affairs Department of Political Science in University of Illinois Chicago on March 6. 

Mark on finger, a moment of pride

As the world's largest democracy votes to elect a new government, indelible ink marked on voter's finger after voting is a key aspect of the election process in India



Indelible Ink, popularly known as Voter's Ink to mark on voter's finger during elections to avoid fraudulent, multiple voting and malpractices, is not an ordinary ink, once it is applied on the finger it remains for few months.

The credibility of producing the special ink goes to the Mysore Paints and Varnish Limited (MPVL) the Government of Karnataka undertaking, which is supplying this ink to India and various foreign countries.

In India, the company has been a great challenge for the government and the Election Commission to hold and complete the process of general elections. In achieving this and to eliminate the fake voting, the election commis-



sion has introduced a measure, i.e. using Indelible Ink which is put on the left hand finger nail of the voter.

The Indelible Ink cannot be removed by any chemical, detergents or oil, it remains for few months.

Mysore Paints and Varnish Limited (MPVL) specialized in manufacturing and supply of quality Indelible Ink, in association with the Election

Commission of India, National Physical Laboratory, and National Research Development Corporation (NRDC).

MPVL is the sole authorized supplier of this type of foolproof Indelible Ink in India having exclusive license granted by National Research Development Corporation (NRDC), New Delhi since 1962.

Apart from supplying indelible ink to Indian elections, Mysore Paints & Varnish Ltd has been exporting the Ink to 28 countries across the world since 1976, to name some few countries are: Turkey, South Africa, Nigeria, Nepal, Ghana, Papua-New Guinea, Burkina Faso, Canada, Togo, Sierra Leone, Malaysia, Cambodia etc.

'Aviation sector offers huge opportunity to foreign investors'

India, which is poised to become the third largest aviation market in the world by 2020, offers tremendous opportunities for foreign investors. This was stated by Civil Aviation Minister Ajit Singh while inaugurating India Aviation 2014, the country's largest civil aviation show, in Hyderabad on March 12.

The Minister underlined the need for increasing international collaboration in the sector.

Minister Singh said the Indian government envisaged an investment of ₹725.33 billion in the airports sector during the 12th Plan period, of which ₹557.48 billion is expected to come from the private sector for construction of new airports, expansion and



modernization of existing airports and development of low-cost airports.

He said the move to allow 49 per cent FDI by foreign airlines in Indian carriers was the biggest game changer in attracting FDI and roping in private investment. "The results of this policy are already visible as two airlines — Air Asia and Tata SIA — are in the process of starting their operations in the near future," he said. — IANS

India has potential to be largest aviation market: Report

India has the potential to become the third largest aviation market by 2020 and the largest by 2030, said a report by FICCI-KPMG.

There is large untapped potential for growth due to the fact that access to aviation is still a dream for nearly 99.5 percent of the country's population, said the report released at 'Indian Aviation 2014' on March 13 in Hyderabad. The report says Indian civil aviation industry is on a high growth trajectory, albeit with minor hiccups. "The industry has ushered in a new wave of expansion driven by Low Cost Carriers (LCC), modern airports, FDI in domestic airlines, cutting edge IT interventions and a growing emphasis on No-Frills Airports (NFA) and regional connectivity," said the report.

One of the top 10 in the world, the size of India's civil aviation industry is around ₹596 billion. However, the paper says, this is a fraction of what it can actually achieve.

The report notes that the next generation of aviation growth in India will be triggered by regional airports.

At present, there are around 450 used, unused or abandoned airports and airstrips spread all over the country. The report pointed out that many Indian states, especially in Eastern India, have started taking pro-active measures to promote air connectivity.

The report also called for immediately setting up Essential Air Services Fund by the ministry as this will have a multiplier effect in terms of higher growth of local economic activities, tourism and employment. — IANS

India to build 200 low-cost airports

India plans to build 200 low-cost airports in the next 20 years to connect tier-II and tier-III cities, said a Civil Aviation Ministry official. G Ashok Kumar, Joint Secretary, Civil Aviation, told reporters in Hyderabad that low-cost, small and no-frill airports would be built in tier-II and tier-III cities, which are expected to spur the development of the aviation sector in the second phase.

"As the operating and service costs at the major airports are phenomenally high, there are plans to build small no-frill airports. They will have the basic infrastructure and will be like upgraded high-class railway stations," he said. The government also plans to construct 15 additional airports in the country under the Greenfield Airport Policy, by identifying the most suitable low cost viable model.

Airports Authority of India plans to invest \$15 billion in the development of non metro airports during the 12th Plan.

India is planning to invest over \$120 billion in the development of airport infrastructure; improvement in connecting infrastructure; development of world class air navigation services infrastructure to improve the air connectivity.

India currently ranks ninth but is expected to become the third largest after US and China by 2020.

Boeing, SpiceJet sign ₹264 bn deal

Boeing and SpiceJet inked ₹264 billion deal for 42 aircraft on March 12.

The mega deal was signed at the inauguration of India Aviation 2014, India's largest civil aviation event, in Hyderabad.

The first of the 42 737-8 MAX aircraft ordered by SpiceJet will be delivered in 2018, Dinesh Keskar, Senior Vice-President of Asia Pacific and India sales, Boeing Commercial Airplanes, said.

Keskar and S.L. Narayanan, Group CFO for The Sun Group, signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the presence of Civil Aviation Minister Ajit Singh.

Keskar said the aircraft, a variant of 737-800, was 14 percent more fuel efficient.

Foreign tourist arrivals up 7.2 percent in February

Foreign Tourist arrivals (FTAs) in February, 2014 was 738,000 compared to 688,000 in February last year with a growth of 7.2 percent.

Foreign exchange earnings (FEEs) from tourism in rupee terms in February clocked ₹113.55 billion compared to ₹102.52 billion in February, 2013.

FTAs during February 2014 was 738,000 compared to FTAs of 688,000 during February 2013 and 681,000 in February 2012. Growth of 7.2 percent in February 2014 over February 2013. The growth was only 1 percent in February 2013 over February 2012. FTAs during January-February 2014 were 1.45 million (5.1 percent), compared to the FTAs of 1.38 million with a growth of 1.8 percent during January-February 2013 over the corresponding period of 2012.

Bringing cheer to travel companies faced with a drop in foreign tourist arrivals in India last year, the government said domestic tourism crossed the one billion mark in 2012.

The tourism ministry had earlier said provisional figures showed there were 1,036.35 million domestic tourists



India's travel and tourism industry is set to grow by about 7.3 percent in 2014

Foreign tourist

FTAS DURING February 2014 was 738,000 compared to FTAs of 688,000 during February 2013 and 681,000 in February 2012.

Growth of 7.2 percent in February 2014 over February 2013.

The growth was only 1 percent in February 2013 over February 2012.

during 2012 — which is a 16.5 percent increase over the 864.53 million recorded in 2011.

Initial estimates of foreign tourist arrivals in 2013 show a falling growth of around four percent, less than the five percent growth in 2012 when upwards of 20 million foreign tourists visited India. Foreign exchange earnings from tourism in 2013 grew 2.2 percent.

— IANS

Media, entertainment industry to grow 14.2 percent

India's media and entertainment (M&E) industry is expected to log a 14.2-percent growth to over R 1.78 trillion in the next four years, according to a FICCI-KPMG report released in Mumbai on March 12.

Driven largely by digitization, the industry in 2013 grew at 11.8 percent over 2012 and touched ₹918 billion.

“The media and entertainment industry is expected to register a CAGR of 14.2 percent to touch ₹17.85 billion by 2018,” said FICCI-KPMG report titled ‘The Stage Is Set’. The report sees digital advertising witnessing the highest compounded average growth rate (CAGR) of 27.7 percent by 2018.



Leading dignitaries during the three-day long FICCI conference in Mumbai recently

Lauding the healthy growth of the media and entertainment industry, Uday Shankar, Chairman, FICCI Media & Entertainment Committee, said the real value of the sector is that

it remains central to defining the direction of the country's social and economic path. The focus of the three-day-long event was Media and Entertainment: Transforming Lives.

Low-cost drugs for developing nations

Stressing that India's pharmaceutical technology was appropriate for Africa, Commerce & Industry Minister Anand Sharma said India is committed to making available to developing countries newer generation life-saving drugs also.

He said that the entire health care system of 87 developing countries is supported by Indian medicines.

"India is committed to ensure that even the new generation of life-saving drugs that the Indian pharma industry will make are available to our people and people of developing countries," Minister Sharma said at the 10th CII-Exim Bank conclave on India-Africa



Project Partnership in New Delhi on March 9. He said the arrival of Indian generic drugs had changed the global discourse on anti-retrovirals (ARVs) for the treatment of HIV-AIDS in African countries.



Six Indian institutes to get aid from Gates foundation

Six Indian institutions were selected for financial aid from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to work out solutions to the poor sanitation levels in the country.

The institutions were given two years to develop innovative, safe and affordable technologies to improve sanitation.

Eram Scientific Solutions and Amrita School of Biotechnology from Kerala, Pradin Technologies from Bangalore, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee in collaboration with Fresh Rooms Life Sciences, Institute of Chemical Technology from Mumbai and Birla Institute of Technology from Goa were selected for the grant during a fair "Reinvent the Toilet" in New Delhi on approaches to improve sanitation.

The 45 exhibits showcased at the fair aim to bring safe, affordable and sustainable sanitation to those who need it the most in India.

The institutions will work on self-sustained, modular and electronic toilets with solar energy for the Indian weather, and concepts to target pathogens and odour-producing bacteria. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has done a research study on poor sanitation in states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha.

Air passenger traffic grows 1.10 percent in February



Domestic air passenger traffic rose 1.10 percent in February to 4.94 million passengers — up from 4.89 million ferried during the corresponding month last year, data showed on March 14.

According to Civil Aviation Ministry, passengers carried by domestic airlines during January-February, 2014 was up 0.69 percent at 10.09 million from 10.02 million passengers in the corresponding period of last year.

Budget carrier GoAir achieved the highest overall occupancy in the month

under review at 77.3 percent, followed by JetLite at 76.4 percent, IndiGo at 75.5 percent, Air India's domestic operations at 75.1 percent, Jet Airways at 72.3 percent and newly formed Air Costa at 71.6 percent.

The data also showed that low cost carrier (LCC) SpiceJet had the highest cancellation rate of 1.5 percent followed by GoAir at 1.3 percent, Jet Airways at 1.3 percent, Air India's domestic operations at 1.2 percent, JetLite at 0.7 percent and IndiGo at 0.5 percent.

— IANS

Domestic car sales up 1.39 percent in February

Sale of domestic passenger cars grew marginally by 1.39 percent in February, industry data showed on March 10.

Data from the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) showed that 217,749 units were sold in the month under review as against an offtake of 226,483 units in the corresponding period of 2013.

According to SIAM, the recent excise duty cut and the Auto Expo have created positive sentiment but it was too early to say if that can translate into sustained automobile sales trend.

Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, in the interim budget 2014-15, reduced the central excise on small cars, scooters/two-wheelers from 12 to eight percent.

He also reduced the central excise from 30 percent to 24 percent on SUVs (sports utility vehicle), and medium segment sedans from 27-24 percent to 24-20 percent, respectively.



The data also showed that utility vehicles sales fell by 9.09 percent at 43,507 units from 47,859 units sold in the corresponding period of 2012.

Domestic sales of vans fell by 32.76 percent at 13,524 units from 20,112 units off-take in February, last year.

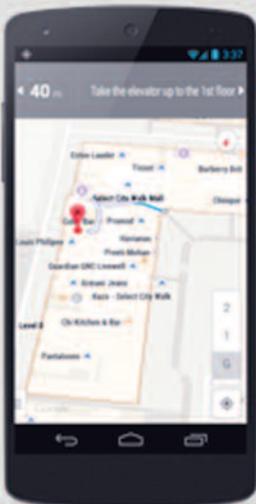
Total passenger vehicle sales which includes, cars, utility vehicles and vans in the month under review went down

by 3.86 percent at 217,749 units from an off-take of 226,483 units in February 2013. For last month, SIAM reported a 23.96 percent decline in sales of heavy, medium and light commercial vehicles (M&HCVs) which are a key indicator of economic activity. Sales stood at 16,372 units from 21,530 units in the corresponding month of last year.

— IANS

Search engine Google offers indoor maps in India

Global search engine Google is offering indoor maps in India, beginning from Bangalore, at selected locations such as malls across the city to enable visitors to explore them at ease.



"Our indoor maps will provide a view of fashion stores to movie theatres and supermarkets on different floors in malls, which are evolving into convenient one-stop entertainment hubs," the company's Indian subsidiary said in a statement. It has uploaded maps of 75 popular indoor venues across the country.

"The maps can be accessed and zoomed on an Android platform with detailed floor plans of the malls on a smart-phone loaded with Google Maps application. In some locations, a user will have the option of using the indoor

My Location feature to help him/her navigate their way inside," the statement added. The application's blue dot icon will also help indicate a user's location in a mall.

Bharatiya Mahila Bank expanding base across India

The Bharatiya Mahila Bank (BMB), the country's first all-women bank, aiming to economically empower women will open 55 more branches across the country by next fiscal (2014-15), a senior bank official said in Agartala on March 24.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Congress president Sonia Gandhi inaugurated the BMB on November 19 last year simultaneously opening seven branches of the government-owned bank. Before the end of the current fiscal (2013-14), the number of branches would be 24 in the country. "To empower the women economically, the total number of branches across India would be about 80 by March 2015," said Usha Ananthasubramanian, BMB chairman and managing director. Of the 80 branches, 20 percent would be set up in rural areas. After inaugurating the 20th branch of the BMB, she said: "Our aim is to involve housewives, unemployed young women, rural and energetic ladies to start small units taking loan from this bank on concessional schemes."



Usha Ananthasubramanian, CMD, BMB

India Inc expects economy to grow at 5.5%

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) on March 30 said a survey by it pointed to improved economic growth in the next fiscal.

“The GDP growth for the year 2014-15 is projected at 5.5 percent. The participating economists expect the industrial sector to also recover in the next fiscal with an estimated growth of 3.3 percent,” the industry chamber said in a statement.

Agriculture and services sector growth in the next financial year is pegged at 3.3 percent and 7 percent, respectively, according to FICCI’s ‘Economic Outlook Survey’.

It also estimates that growth in the fourth quarter of the current fiscal will pick up marginally to five percent.

“However, this might imply that actual growth in the year 2013-14 will be slightly lower than the growth of 4.9 percent projected by the Central Statistical Organization some time back,” the chamber said.

On inflation, it said that a majority of the surveyed felt that going ahead both the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based



Finance Minister P Chidambaram (L) says Indian economy is more stable today than it was 20 months back

Indian economy more stable: Chidambaram

FINANCE MINISTER P. Chidambaram on March 31 said the Indian economy is more stable than it was 20 months back and the government is hopeful of meeting major macro-economic targets, including fiscal and current account deficits.

“The economy today is far more stable and far stronger than it was 20 months ago,” Chidambaram said at a media conference in New Delhi.

inflation rates would remain range-bound. The median forecast for fiscal deficit as a percent of gross domestic product (GDP) stands at 4.4 percent for 2014-15, higher than the 4.1 percent estimate announced by Finance Minister P. Chidambaram.

“The government must also allow market forces to play a fuller role in determining the price of fuel products in particular,” the statement added.

On the external sector, the survey pegs current account deficit to remain in the comfort zone at 2.2 percent in 2014-15.

— IANS

IBM to open new lab in Bangalore

Global IT major IBM on March 28 announced investing ₹60 billion to set eight new labs worldwide, including one here for enabling its clients work with experts in design, mobile and digital marketing. “We will open the new labs in Bangalore, Beijing, Groningen (Netherlands), London, Melbourne, New York, Sao Paulo and Shanghai to provide our clients an opportunity to work with our researchers and consultants on design, data and analytics,” the US-based company said in Bangalore.

The company also plans to hire about 1,000 employees for the labs to help its clients develop personalized

models of engagement. “The new labs will make multi-discipline experts available to help companies recreate their customer experience,” IBM global business services vice-president Bridget van Kralingen said.

Multi-discipline teams in the labs will analyze business challenges and jointly develop solutions that integrate next-generation mobile, social, analytics and cloud technologies.

“As our clients redefine how they engage with their customers or employees, they discover that the traditional digital agency model has limits. We are closing these gaps by integrating our world-class design and research with our strength in big data,”



Kralingen noted.

“Our researchers are developing capabilities to harness the value of data to help clients create personalized experiences, while designers are working with clients to develop the design that makes a difference in business outcomes,” Kralingen said. Each day, the company generates 2.5 quintillion bytes of data. — IANS

Hilton to expand in Bangalore

Hospitality major Hilton Worldwide is expanding its presence in Bangalore by opening its second hotel in the city's upscale eastern suburb March 27.

"As our fourth brand hotel in India, Hilton Bangalore Residences will expand our presence in an important market in the country, which is among our key strategic regions," Hilton Hotels & Resorts global head Rob Palleschi said in a statement in Bangalore recently.

Owned by Umbel Properties Ltd, the star hotel is strategically located in a business park that is a hub for several Fortune 500 firms and a commercial nerve center, with easy access to shopping, entertainment and dining.

"The full-service hotel features 247 studios and one-two bedroom suites built for transient business travelers to long-stay guests and offers living, dining and work areas with a fully-equipped kitchenette," Palleschi said.

Hilton forayed into the city early this year by opening its DoubleTree Suites in the northwest suburb.

The suites also have separate living rooms, washers/dryers and dishwashers and the kitchenettes are furnished with appliances for self-catering.

"We offer four stylish dining venues



— Ministry of Food, an all-day global cuisine restaurant; The Salt Grill, a poolside al-fresco bar and grill, an ideal venue to relax; Klinx, a chic lobby bar and the Recess coffee lounge," Hilton India vice-president Daniel Walk said.

For business travelers, the hotel has 24-hour business services and web-enabled computer workstations. Being a key strategic growth market, Hilton operates hotels and resorts in eight other cities across the country - Chennai, Delhi, Goa, Gurgaon, Mumbai, Pune, Thiruvananthapuram and Vadodara (in Gujarat).

FII invested ₹797.09 billion in equity market during FY14

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have invested around ₹797.09 billion in the Indian equity market during FY14, according to data released by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

This was the fifth consecutive fiscal year inflows by foreign investors after pulling out a net amount of ₹477.06 billion from the share market in 2008-09.

Foreign investors invested hugely in the domestic equities markets in 2013-14 because Indian equity markets gave one of the best returns among the emerging countries, according to market analysts.

"FIIs are expected to be bullish on Indian stocks in 2014, despite the US Federal's decision on tapering," said Sudeep Bandhopadhyay, MD and CEO, Destimoney Securities.

In the 2012-13, overseas investors had pumped in nearly ₹283.34 billion in the debt securities. "Overseas investors are looking forward to a stable government that can move reforms process faster, irrespective of which political party comes to power at the Centre," added Bandhopadhyay.

FIIs started the financial year on a positive note and infused more than ₹260 billion in the first two months of FY14 on the back of various reforms initiated by the Government of India.

IIM-A joins hands with Harvard, MIT and Berkeley for research

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard University and University of California, Berkeley have joined hands with the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. There will be joint research projects to develop field water quality testing and filtration equipment, ambient pollution measuring products and mobile technologies for health purposes.

These institutions have decided to work together through a consortium to benefit and address issues of the bottom of the pyramid in and around Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The projects will be partly funded by



the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which has sanctioned grants to the likes of MIT and Berkeley to conduct empirical research in developing countries.

Faculty and students at IIM-A, along with those of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), National Institute of Design (NID); Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT); Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDI) and Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad (MICA), will work with

skilled researchers, faculty and students from Department of Urban Studies and Planning, as well as D-Lab at MIT, South Asia Institute of Harvard University and Center for Effective Global Action at UC Berkeley.

Indian spice exports increase

Buoyed by the significant export of mint, chilli and seeds, the Indian spice industry has achieved a growth of 41 percent during the period of April-December 2013.

This period witnessed a total export of 571,680 tonnes of spices and spice products valued at ₹94.33 billion as against 449,926 tonnes valued at ₹66.96 billion during April-December 2012. "The steady growth of spice exports reiterates the unshaken global demand for Indian spices. The export performance of mint, chilly, value added products and seed spices points to a promising future for the Indian spice industry," said A Jayathilak, chairman, Spices Board India.

The spice sector has had a dream run during April-December 2013 with 78-percent increase in volume and 89 percent in value when compared with April-December 2012.

During the period, a total volume of 193,625 tonnes of seed spices valued



at ₹19.06 billion was exported when compared to 109,067 tonnes valued at ₹10.08 billion in the previous year.

Amongst the seed spices, cumin registered an increase of 89 percent, coriander grew by 48 percent, fenugreek, celery and other seed spices also showed an identical upward trend on the export front.

During April-December 2013, a total volume of 58,000 tonnes of turmeric valued ₹4.64 billion was exported. Pepper and cardamom (small) exports were valued at ₹6.51 billion and ₹1.64 billion, respectively.

IANS

WD launches cloud solutions in India

US-based storage solutions provider Western Digital (WD) on March 27 launched a personal cloud solutions product named "My Cloud" in India that enables users to organize, centralize, secure and access digital contents from anywhere in the world.



By connecting "My Cloud" device to Internet users get anywhere, any device access that they can get from the public cloud, without having to pay monthly fees or giving up control to their personal data. "My Cloud personal cloud storage is an easy-to-use, secure and cost effective storage solution," said Khalid Wani, WD's sales director, branded products for India, Middle East and Africa.

My Cloud is priced in the range of ₹11,000 to ₹15,000. Device for 2 terabyte (TB) of storage capacity comes with a price tag of ₹10,999.

HAL sales up 6 percent in fiscal 2014

State-run Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) posted ₹151.80 billion sales turnover for the just-concluded fiscal 2013-14, registering a marginal six percent growth over previous fiscal (2012-13) at ₹143.24 billion.

"We rolled out 60 aircraft and helicopters, achieved the initial operational clearance for the light combat aircraft (LCA)

Tejas fighter and filed 209 patents during the fiscal under review," HAL Chairman RK Tyagi said in a statement in Bangalore.

The defense behemoth's operating profit, however, shot up 38 percent year-on-year (YoY) to ₹16.51 billion from Rs 11.94 billion in 2012-13.

The company's value of production has gone up 7.7 percent YoY to ₹152.96 crore last fiscal from ₹142.02 billion year ago.



Bharti Airtel, IBM join hands for 5 years

Telecom service provider Bharti Airtel and IBM inked a pact to manage Airtel's infrastructure and application services in India over the next five years, a company statement said in New Delhi recently.

"As we embark on the next phase of Airtel's growth journey, I am confident that the agreement with IBM will help us offer innovative and cutting edge products and services to our customers, enabling us achieve our vision of being the most loved brand," Gopal Vittal, MD & CEO, Bharti Airtel (India & South Asia) said in a statement.

This deal was inked following the lapsing of the previous 10-year deal

March 31 between the two top companies.

Airtel and IBM also have partnerships for IT infrastructure and services across Airtel's international operations spanning 19 countries including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and the Africa region.

"In the last decade, Bharti's customer base has increased from a few million to over 285 million. Airtel partnered with IBM to drive this growth, by using technology to respond with intuitive offers for customers, managing service delivery, and improving organizational efficiency," said Vanitha Narayanan, managing director, IBM India.



IANS

Indian scientist gets Germany's top award

Eminent Indian biologist Seyed Ehtesham Hasnain, a professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi has been awarded Germany's highest civilian award, the Order of Merit.

Hasnain, known for his work on tuberculosis, was bestowed with the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany by German ambassador to India Michael Steiner at an informal ceremony in New Delhi on March 11.

The Indian biologist has been



SE Hasnain (left) receiving the Order of Merit from German Ambassador to India Michael Steiner.

awarded for his "outstanding achievements in the relationship between the two countries".

With the award, he joins the league of outstanding personalities from various fields including Nobel laureate biologist Paul Herman Muller, former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone and music conductor John Crosby.

"The recognition has raised the expectations from me of my friends and peers alike," Hasnain told *Nature India* after receiving the award. 

World's first solar-powered toilet set for launch in India

A revolutionary toilet fueled by the sun that is being developed to help some of the 2.5 billion people around the world lacking safe and sustainable sanitation would be unveiled in India this month.

"The self-contained, waterless toilet has the capability of heating human waste to a high enough temperature to sterilizes human waste and create biochar, a highly porous charcoal," informed project principal investigator Karl Linden, professor of environmental engineering at University of Colorado Boulder. The biochar can be used to both increase crop yields and sequester carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas.

The project is part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's 'Reinvent the Toilet Challenge', an effort to develop a next-generation toilet that can be used to disinfect liquid and solid waste while generating useful end products. "The invention consists of eight parabolic mirrors that focus concentrated sunlight to a spot no larger than a postage stamp on a quartz-glass rod connected to eight bundles of fiber-optic cables, each consisting of thousands of intertwined, fused fibres," Linden explained. The energy generated by the sun and transferred to the fiber-optic cable system can heat up the reaction chamber to over 600 degrees Fahrenheit to treat the waste material.

Indian-American researchers find new target to control diabetes

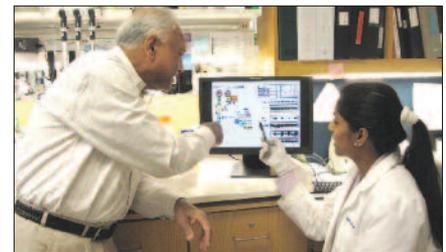
In a thrilling discovery, two Indian-American researchers have identified a new potential therapeutic target for controlling high blood sugar — a finding that could help millions suffering from type 2 diabetes worldwide.

Researchers showed that lipid molecules called phosphatidic acids enhance glucose production in the liver. The findings suggest that inhibiting or reducing production of phosphatidic acids may do the opposite.

"This study establishes a role for phosphatidic acids in enhancing glucose production by the liver and identifies enzymes involved in the synthesis of phosphatidic acids as potential drug targets," explained Anil Agarwal, a professor of internal medicine at University of Texas' Southwestern Medical Center.

These observations were made while studying a mouse model of lipodystrophy, a rare metabolic disease in which the body is devoid of fat.

Lipodystrophy patients often develop diabetes and accumulate fat in the liver because of an imbalance in the body's ability to properly regulate lipids and glucose. The causal gene 'AGPAT2' which is involved in the synthesis of phosphatidic acid and triglycerides,



Dr Anil Agarwal and Dr Shireesha Sankella

was removed in the mice — resulting in rodents with generalized lipodystrophy. The research team then examined what impact this genetic manipulation had on phosphatidic acids and glucose production.

"We expected the levels of phosphatidic acids to go down. However, in examining the livers of these lipodystrophic mice, we unexpectedly found high levels of this lipid class," added lead author Shireesha Sankella, a post-doctoral researcher. Researchers also discovered a marked increase in glucose production in the livers of the lipodystrophic mice.

Increased phosphatidic acid levels may play a key role in a metabolic pathway that supplies energy to cancer cells, said the study published in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*.

IANS 

Puneet Talwar gets senior US State Department job

Yet another Indian American, Puneet Talwar, a longtime White House national security staffer, was confirmed by the US Senate on March 13 to the key job of serving as a bridge between the state and defense departments. As the State Department's new Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs, Talwar, will be taking over the bureau that manages US defense exports as well as serving as the bridge between two key departments.



person for South and central Asia.

Earlier, Kerala University physics graduate Arun Madhavan Kumar was confirmed to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the US and Foreign Commercial Service along with Talwar. Talwar became

the third Indian-American in a top position at the State Department after Nisha Desai Biswal, point person for South and Central Asia and USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, highest ranking Indian-American in Obama administration. At over two dozen, Obama administration has the highest number of Indian Americans in key jobs than any previous administrations in US.

IANS

Award for Indian-American professor

Susmita Roye, an Indian-American associate professor of English at the Delaware State University, has been named as a recipient of the National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) Award for Faculty. Roye will receive financial support from the grant award, which will enable her to take some time off from teaching to finish the book.



Susmita Royce

The award has been given in recognition and support of her current book manuscript project, which is about the women writers of India during British rule (1757-1947). She has tentatively titled the book *Mothering India*. She was one of only eight people to receive the award out of 101 applications, according to an announcement on the university website.

The NEH, an independent federal agency created in 1965, is one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the US.

New York mayor taps three Indian-Americans for key jobs

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio has tapped three Indian-Americans for key positions with Meera Joshi named to serve as Chairperson and CEO of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC). Nisha Agarwal, a leading advocate for the city's immigrant communities, has been named as commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and Udai Tambar, the Executive Director of South Asian Youth Action (SAYA!), the new Director of Children and Youth Services.

"Meera Joshi is a dedicated public servant with the experience and energy to move our Taxi and Limousine Commission in a progressive direction, ensuring we prioritize New Yorkers' safety," he said.

"I am committed to the de Blasio administration's agenda of providing equitable taxi and for-hire transportation services and safe streets for all New Yorkers," said Joshi.

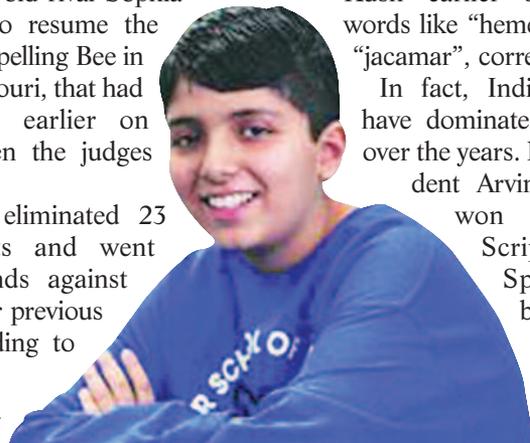
Indian-American boy wins epic spelling bee battle

After a two-week 90-round grueling battle, a 13-year-old Indian-American student Kush Sharma finally broke a tie in a local county contest to go to the National Spelling Bee competition.

The Indian champion on March 8 faced his 11-year-old rival Sophia Hoffman again to resume the Jackson County Spelling Bee in Kansas City, Missouri, that had ended in a tie earlier on February 22 when the judges ran out of words.

The two had eliminated 25 other contestants and went another 47 rounds against each other in their previous encounter, according to Kansas City Star.

13-year-old Indian-American Kush Sharma



But in the end, in the 29th round Kush Sharma, a seventh-grader from Kansas City, won with not a tongue twister but a simple word — "definition" after Sophia, a Lee's Summit fifth-grader too stumbled on her word — "stifling" — in round 28.

Kush earlier spelled killer words like "hemerocallis", and "jacamar", correctly.

In fact, Indian-Americans have dominated the contest over the years. New York student Arvind Mahankali won the 2013 Scripps National Spelling Bee, breaking a personal four-year losing streak.

Fried fish safari in Goa

If you are a foodie and want to savor the finest delicacies in this India's finest tourist destination, head inland away from the breathtaking beaches. And its fried fish is the most sought for any sea food aficionado



21

If you ever want to eat the best fried fish in Goa, you gotta do one thing for sure: Head inland away from the sea, away from the fancy beach-belt diners and those beach shacks offering assembly-line food. Under clay-tiled roofs, dodging tendrils of smoke in dim light and occasionally holding your breath to avoid breaths reeking of feni, pans laden with coarse flour-coated fried fish sizzle in delight in Goa's taverns.

Near Panaji, Kuttikar Bar lies at the end of a loose-gravel road behind what was once a stone mine. But for sea food aficionados it's a gold mine as far as fresh fish is concerned.

Run by former legislator Krishna Kuttikar, the bar serves some of the best fried fish this side of the river, whether it's filleted Red Snapper, Rock Fish, Bombay Duck or Mussels. But the sweet and sour vinegar-kissed squid rings are the most sought after.

On most days, getting a seat in the bar can be a problem with the 10 or so tables packed to capacity with binging junior bureaucrats, off-duty policemen, local residents and journalists among others which even includes staffers from the chief minister's office.

Over in Siolim, the Amancio Bar overlooks a picturesque river and an abandoned ferry ramp. Amancio's has a quaint wooden balcony with tables overlooking what was once a busy market place. But once the crusty fish lands on your plate, your attention doesn't get anywhere else.

"The *palu* (perch) marinated fried with *recheado* (red chilli paste, spices and vinegar) masala is smooth-watering and priced affordable too," says Ashley do Rosario, who swears by the place. Sheela Bar, located off the St. Jacinto island along the airport road has grown over the last couple of decades from a shack to a bar and

restaurant almost threatening to go the fine dining way.

Unlike most fried fish haunts which use a red chilli marinade before slipping the fish into the pan, Sylvester D'Souza uses a unique green chilli paste. "This is our trademark. But we have a lot more offer in terms of fish, oysters, crabs and meats," says D'Souza. His relatively sweet crab is unique too, as against the fiery garam masala spiced variants found in other restaurants. The crabs are more often than not bursting with flesh and that sweet, fresh flavor.

And then there are really rustic taverns like the one run by Madhu Halarnkar right next to a popular medicinal spring in the village of Pomburpa. His small operation reflects the quintessential soul of a Goa tavern: four tables, animated conversation, mingling odours of stale sweat, spilt feni and fish frying in the kitchen. ■

New York Indian Film Festival to spotlight Gurinder Chadha

The 14th Annual New York Indian Film Festival will put the spotlight on British filmmaker Gurinder Chadha to celebrate the 20 year anniversary of her acclaimed film *Bhaji On The Beach*.

The six-day festivities at the oldest and most prestigious film festival for Indian cinema in North America from May 5-10 will also include a retrospective of the filmmaker's documentaries, according to the Indo-American Arts Council (IAAC).

After a star-studded opening night red carpet premiere at the Skirball Center for Performing Arts, festival screenings, centre-piece, retrospective and special events will take place throughout the week at the Village East Cinemas.

The closing night selection to be followed by the annual awards ceremony and after-party would be held at Skirball Center for Performing Arts.

Final film selections will be announced by early April with tickets going on sale

April 15. Chadha of *Bend It Like Beckham* fame will be in attendance.

NYIFF will also feature a retrospective of Chadha's documentaries, co-presented by Third World Newsreel.

The featured documentaries include *Acting Our Age, I'm British But, A Nice Arrangement* and *What Do You Call An Indian Woman Who Is Funny?*

"Gurinder Chadha is one of three 'Bhanji Brigade' (coined by Mira Nair) super star diaspora women filmmakers — the other two being Mira Nair and Deepa Mehta — all three of whom have been honoured for their talent by NYIFF in years past," said IAAC executive director Aroon Shivdasani.

Film festival director Aseem Chhabra added: "Gurinder explores the Asian Indian immigrant experiences in Britain, laced with humour, pathos and a lot of introspection."



Hollywood film 'Warrior' inspires new Hindi film



The 2011 Hollywood sports drama *Warrior* has inspired a new Hindi film which will be co-produced by leading global entertainment company Lionsgate and Endemol India.

Hindi film *Warrior*, inspired by Lionsgate's North American release of the same name, will be the first film jointly produced by the two firms in India.

"*Warrior* will be a quality film made with top-of-the-line production values that we believe will strike a responsive chord with Indian audiences," Deepak Dhar, CEO, Endemol India, said in a statement.

Warrior tells the story of two estranged brothers and deals with their struggling relationship with each other and their father.

'Queen' takes the box office by storm

Queen is giving tough competition to recently released *Bewakoofiyaa* — while the Kangana starrer has hauled in Rs 2.1 million and is still going strong at the box office, the weekend earning of Sonam Kapoor's film is just Rs 47.4 million, say trade pundits.

Rajesh Thadani of Multimedia Combines summed up the films' performances: "*Queen*' is doing an outstanding business and it's still going houseful in many theaters. Though *Bewakoofiyaa* released this Friday, yet the business of *Queen* has not been affected."

Directed by Vikas Bahl, *Queen*, an atypical



Kangana Ranaut (far left) has essayed an inspiring role in the film *Queen*

drama, came out March 7 along with much talked about Madhuri Dixit-Juhi Chawla's gritty hinterland drama *Gulaab Gang* and Yami

Gautam and Ali Zafar's romantic comedy *Total Siyapaa*.

Film critic Taran Adarsh shared the first weekend earning of *Bewakoofiyaa* and the second week collection of *Queen* on his Twitter page. He tweeted: "*Bewakoofiyaa* Fri Rs. 22.3 million, Sat Rs 25.1 million. Total: Rs 47.4 million nett. India biz."

"*Queen* (Week 2) Fri Rs.21.5 million. Grand total: Rs.210 million nett. India biz."

Thadani said: "*Queen* is doing well in the multiplexes universally..The collection of *Bewakoofiyaa* is not up to the mark."

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR: An unexplored paradise



With its breathtaking beaches and pristine islands, wonderful opportunities for adventure sports like snorkeling and sea-walking, this island offers a lot to tourists

Endowed with picturesque landscapes, sterling beaches and nature's generous gifts, the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago has always been a tourist's paradise. The group of 572 emerald islands in the Bay of Bengal, out of which only 36 are inhabited, is surely waiting to be discovered.

With its exotic looking beaches and pristine islands having equally exotic names, wonderful opportunities for adventure sports like snorkeling and sea-walking and a vast succulent array of seafood delicacies that come cheaper than the vegetables brought from the mainland, the Andamans can compare with many other dream tourist destinations across the globe.

One can laze around the enticing beaches at Havelock Islands, or Ross and Smith — the twin islands joined by a bewitching sandbar. Sea-bathing and sun-basking at the Corbyn's Cove beach helps one to unwind and de-stress while the Hilltop Gallows on Viper Island and Port Blair's Cellular Jail are sure to overwhelm the visitors

with a sense of patriotism as the clock ticks back to the days of India's freedom struggle.

According to official estimates, the flow of tourists doubled to nearly 300,000 in 2012 from 130,000 in 2008-09. Less than 10 percent were foreign visitors. The tourism department feels in coming years the growth rate of tourists will be higher, considering attractions here.

A beach in Andaman and Nicobar Island is often the most sought after for any tourist



HOW TO REACH

Andaman, being an island, can be reached in only two ways – by air or by sea.

BY AIR: You have direct daily flights to Port Blair (capital of Andaman) from Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai. Some flights also fly from Bhubaneswar in Odisha on certain days. Veer Savarkar International Airport, Port Blair is the only airport here.

BY SEA: You can sail from Chennai, Vizag and Kolkata. There are usually 3-4 sailings every month and the tentative sailing schedule can be found here. Ship voyage takes about 50-60 hours.

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