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PSLV-C25 Mars Orbiter Mission Spacecraft — Mangalyan, successfully launched from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, on November 5. Photo: IANS

## Indian Orbiter on course to encounter Mars

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PSLV-C25 Mars Orbiter Mission Spacecraft — Mangalyan, successfully launched from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, on November 5. Photo: IANS

## Indian Orbiter on course to encounter Mars

India's Mars Orbiter, on course to Red Planet, would catapult the country to become the first Asian nation and fourth in the world once it begins orbiting Mars in 2014

**T**he Indian Orbiter to Mars zoomed out of the Earth's sphere of influence on December 4 while cruising in the Sun orbit on its 10-month-long voyage to the Red Planet.

"The Mars Orbiter has traversed beyond the Earth's sphere of influence, which extends up to 925,000 km in the interplanetary space at 1.14 a.m.," the state-run Indian Space

Research Organisation (ISRO) said.

Exiting from the Earth's sphere of influence means the spacecraft is out of its gravitational pull and free to cruise in the 680-million km solar orbit to reach Mars in mid-September 2014.

"Though the Sun's gravity dominates the solar system owing to its massive size, only very near to planets, the planetary gravity becomes

stronger than that of Sun and is referred as the sphere of influence," the Indian space agency said.

Orbits of Moon and artificial satellites around fall inside the Earth's sphere of influence. A day after escaping from Earth on December 1, the spacecraft crossed the Moon's orbit the next day, which is 385,000 km away and became the farthest object of India in the interplanetary space.

## THE SPACECRAFT WILL ENTER IN MID-SEPTEMBER THE MARS SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, WHICH IS AROUND 573,473 KM FROM ITS SURFACE, IN A HYPERBOLIC TRAJECTORY

Scientists at the Indian telemetry, tracking and command network (ISTRAC) in Bangalore and the Indian Deep Space Network at Bylalu, about 40 km from Bangalore, are monitoring the spacecraft's movement in the Sun-synchronous orbit and checking its subsystems.

The spacecraft will enter in mid-September the Mars sphere of influence, which is around 573,473 km from its surface, in a hyperbolic trajectory.

When the spacecraft is closest to Mars, it will be captured into the Martian orbit through a crucial manoeuvre, which involves slowing its velocity (speed).

Transition from the Earth's final orbit to solar orbit was programmed in line with the Sun's gravity and laws of the universe to ensure the Orbiter

reaches precisely on time to sling into the Martian orbit in mid-September.

The 1,337 kg Orbiter was launched on November 5 from Sriharikota spaceport off the Bay of Bengal, about 80km north east of Chennai, onboard a 350-ton rocket with five scientific instruments — Mars Color Camera, Methane Sensor, Thermal Infrared Imaging Spectrometer, Lyman Alpha Photometer, and Mars exospheric Neutral Composition Analyser.

With the launch of Mangalyan — as we call India's first Mars Mission — India became the first Asian country and fourth nation in the world to leap into the interplanetary space with its ₹4.5-billion exploratory mission to Mars, about 400 million km from Earth.

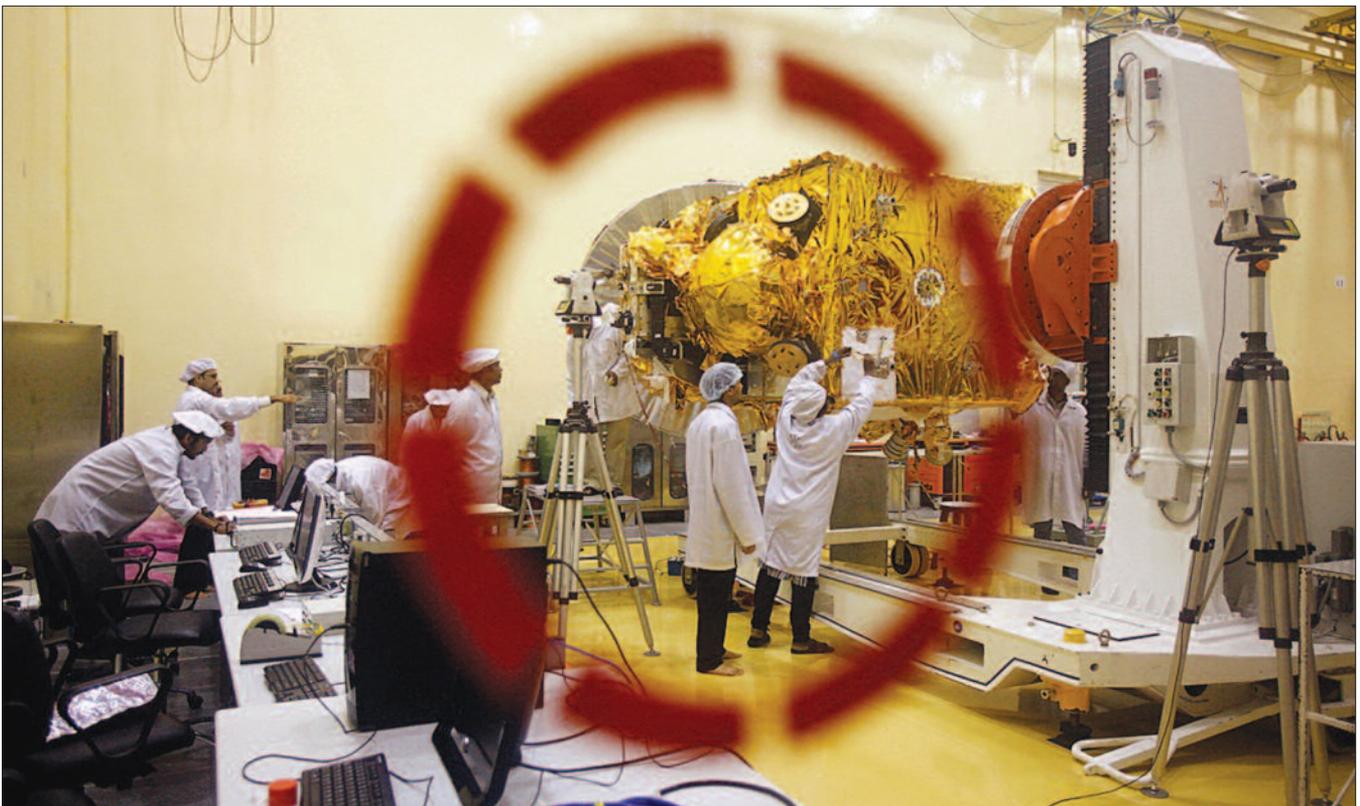
So far, only Russia, U.S. and the

European Space Agency (ESA) have undertaken such missions.

### Delivered in space

One of the notable aspects of India's Mars mission is that the idea was conceived and executed in 15 months with a shoe-string budget. "While preliminary capability studies for planetary missions were continuously made in ISRO since decades ago, the Advisory Committee for Space Science (ADCOS) has taken up the formulation of the vision document for planetary exploration program of ISRO," V. Adimurthy, Senior Advisor (Interplanetary Missions), said.

He said the ADCOS had identified missions to Mars as one important component of this vision. In August 2010, the Mars Mission Study Team



Mars Orbiter Mission is India's first interplanetary mission to planet Mars with an orbiter craft designed to orbit Mars in an elliptical orbit.

was constituted with its 18 members drawn from all the major ISRO centers.

The idea was to concretize the vision identified by ADCOS into an integrated and viable blueprint for the Mars mission. Adimurthy said the 18-member team was ably supported by hundreds of scientists and engineers across all the ISRO centers.

“The study team’s report was submitted to ISRO Chairman in June 2011,” Adimurthy said. The report detailed launch scenarios, ISRO’s capabilities for Mars mission, launch opportunities, spacecraft/orbiter design and configuration challenges, possible scientific experiments to augment the current understanding of Martian science, deep space network challenges were addressed, Adimurthy added.

While, several possible options for a Mars mission were presented for consideration, detailed mission analysis results for the 2013 launch opportunity were highlighted, he added. The expert team discussed mission options

like fly-by, Orbiter and others.

“It appeared that a fly-by, which gives only a short time for scientific study, is not really attractive. But an Orbiter or a Lander would require larger transportation capability that may not be met by our established and reliable launch systems we now have,” Adimurthy said. The expert team discovered that if there is an elliptical orbit mission around Mars than the PSLV-XL version rocket could be used.

The team was delighted that very meaningful, though limited, scientific experiments can be conceived for such a mission, he said.

“A mission like the 2013-14 opportunity to reach Mars is the most appropriate with the energy optimality it offers. Similarly, by a critical analysis of the other technological challenges and the solution options available to us, we come to the conclusion that we can, with a good degree of confidence, undertake this complex mission in 2013,” he said. According to Radhakrishnan, the Space Commission gave its approval for the

mission in December 2011. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh announced the mission in August 2012 after the approval from union cabinet.

## Challenges & solutions

Though the decision was taken to go to Mars, it was not all that easy for the Indian space scientists. They had to face and surmount the challenges in respect of the rocket as well as building the Orbiter.

The lack of heavier rocket that can put the Orbiter in Mars orbit straight was one of the major challenges for ISRO. It had to use its PSLV rocket and park the Orbiter in Earth orbit first and then take it to Mars orbit.

Though PSLV is considered as a reliable rocket, the Mars mission did present challenges for the ISRO’s rocket scientists.

“The launch window is only five minutes and the time available to take decision on the mission is very short. The 28 minutes coasting (rocket moving on its own momentum without engine power) time of the rocket



S. Arunan (centre), Project Director of ISRO’s Mars Orbiter Mission Spacecraft explaining details to Dr. K Radhakrishnan, Chairman ISRO (3<sup>rd</sup> from left); Dr. S.K. Shivakumar, Director, ISRO Satellite Centre (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) and V Koteswara Rao, Scientific Secretary, ISRO (1<sup>st</sup> from left) Photo: ISRO

before the ignition of the fourth engine is also long. The overall launch duration of 45 minutes is nearly double that of normal PSLV launches,” S. Ramakrishnan, Director, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, and member of Launch Authorisation Board, said. “As the flight duration is around 45 minutes, a lot of thermal management is required as the temperature in the space will be low. The systems and equipments have to be protected,” said. P. Kunhikrishnan, Project Director, PSLV Program and mission Director.

ISRO had to hire two ships from Shipping Corporation of India to track the rocket from Pacific Ocean as rocket will be beyond the visibility of the existing tracking stations.

While getting ready the launch pad at Sriharikota was a challenge, on the other hand, the building of Mars Orbiter presented a different set of challenges for the ISRO officials beginning from its size, choice and size of payloads, the distance to be traveled and others.

“Miniaturizing the components as the orbiter does not provide much space and availability of components were challenging,” A.S. Kiran Kumar, Director, Satellite Application Centre and a distinguished scientist said.

Kumar’s center was tasked with building three of the payloads — Mars Color Camera, Methane Sensor and Thermal Infrared Imaging Spectrometer. He said three versions of all the instruments were built-concept, test and flight ready.

“Methane sensor is a new configuration and development for ISRO. This is built on concept of Fabry Perot-Etalon filters. There are very few component vendors,” Kumar said. According to him, the time interval at which the sensor would look at the Mars surface to detect the presence of



Scientists monitoring India’s Mars Orbiter at Indian Space Research Organization’s (ISRO) Spacecraft Control Center in Bangalore.

methane was accordingly calibrated. While the time available to build and test the payloads was short, Kumar said large number of components were already available as ISRO was working on several programs.

“As real time communication between ground stations and orbiter is not possible lots of autonomy had to be given to the spacecraft to take decisions on its own. The thermal systems have to be designed as there is nearly 50 percent difference in climatic temperature between Earth and Mars,” M. Annadurai, Programme Director for the Mars mission, said. A new communication system was built and the Orbiter was made largely autonomous to take decisions. “Restarting the Orbiter’s engine after 300 days, designing the solar power cells and development of a new navigation software were the other challenges,” S. Arunan, Project Director, MOM said.

According to ISRO, the objectives of Mars mission are two-fold — technological and scientific. The technological objectives include design and real-

ization of Mars Orbiter with a capability to survive and perform Earth-bound manoeuvres, cruise phase of 300 days, Mars orbit insertion/capture, and on-orbit phase around Mars. It will also enable deep space communication, navigation, mission planning and management and incorporate autonomous features to handle contingency situations. The scientific mission will be to explore the Mars surface features, morphology, mineralogy and Martian atmosphere by indigenous scientific instruments.

Radhakrishnan said ISRO has several inter-planetary missions on the anvil — Aditya Mission to explore Sun’s corona and another to asteroid Vesta. In addition, ISRO plans another Moon Mission, Chandrayaan-2, in 2016. But that does not mean the space agency is spreading itself thin with various missions nor it has diverted its attention.

Reiterating that India is not in any space race, Radhakrishnan said the space agency is in race with itself. “Our space programmes are people and application centric. The space programs have brought benefit to common people and the fact has been recognized globally,” he said. According to him, the Mars Orbiter Mission will be the fitting tribute to the visionaries of the Indian space program.

## THE SCIENTIFIC MISSION WILL EXPLORE THE MARS SURFACE FEATURES, MORPHOLOGY, MINERALOGY AND MARTIAN ATMOSPHERE

# President Barack Obama wishes Indians ‘Happy Diwali and Saal Mubarak’



U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama joins students for a Bollywood Dance Clinic in the State Dining Room of the White House on November 5. (Official White House Photo by Chuck Kennedy)

President Barack Obama wished Indians “a Happy Diwali and *Saal Mubarak*” saying the festival reminded Americans that the U.S. “is home to many faiths and traditions, and that our diversity makes us stronger”.

That’s “why I’m proud that this year Democrats and Republicans in Congress joined together for the first-ever celebration of Diwali on Capitol Hill,” he said in a statement issued on November 1 on the observance of Diwali.

Over the last five years, President Obama noted, his spouse “Michelle and I have been honored to have the

chance to observe this ancient holiday, both at the White House and in India, and we wish all those celebrating this weekend a Happy Diwali and *Saal Mubarak*.”

## Diwali celebration at White House

U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama lit a *diya* (lamp) in the East room to start White House Diwali celebrations after trying out some Bollywood dance moves with some local students in the State Dining Room.

“We’ve celebrated this holiday here at the White House every year since (President) Barack (Obama) took

*Following is President Barack Obama’s message on the occasion:*

“For the Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists celebrating Diwali this weekend, the Festival of Lights reaffirms the things in life that matter most.

Dancing, celebration, and good food remind us that life’s greatest joys are the simple pleasures that come from spending time with people we love.

Contemplation and prayer remind us that people of all faiths have an obligation to perform *seva*, or service to others. And the flame of the *diya*, or lamp, reminds us that light will ultimately triumph over darkness.

Here in the United States, Diwali also reminds us that our nation is home to many faiths and traditions, and that our diversity makes us stronger, which is why I’m proud that this year Democrats and Republicans in Congress joined together for the first-ever celebration of Diwali on Capitol Hill.

Over the last five years, Michelle and I have been honored to have the chance to observe this ancient holiday, both at the White House and in India, and we wish all those celebrating this weekend a Happy Diwali and *Saal Mubarak*.”

office. And there’s a reason why we’ve done that,” she said welcoming guests including members of the Indian community and Indian-American officials on November 5. “It was the first time that we did Bollywood in the State Room here at the White House,” said the First Lady.

“When we say that we want to make the White House the ‘people’s house,’ we mean all people. We mean that we want to honor and embrace all of the many cultures and faith traditions that make us who we are as Americans. And Diwali is very much one of those traditions,” she said. “It’s a time to come together with

AS WE LIGHT THE *DIYA* — THE LAMP — WE RECOMMIT OURSELVES TO THE TRIUMPH OF LIGHT OVER DARKNESS, OF GOOD OVER EVIL

— U.S. FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA

friends and family, often with dancing and good food,” said Michelle Obama noting Diwali is celebrated by members of some of the world’s oldest religions not just here in America but across the globe.

“But Diwali is also a time for contemplation and reflection. It’s a time for us to think about our obligations to our fellow human beings, particularly those who are less fortunate than we are,” she said.

“And as we light the *diya* — the lamp — we recommit ourselves to the triumph of light over darkness, of good over evil,” she said recalling the shooting tragedy at a Sikh Gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin last year “when an act of unthinkable violence shook a community to its core.”

“I am so proud and so honored to be celebrating this beautiful holiday at the White House with all of you,” the First Lady told guests. “And I wish you all and all your loved ones a Happy Diwali and *Saal Mubarak*.”

President Obama has since 2009 kept up the tradition of White House Diwali celebrations started by President George W. Bush in 2003.

### U.S. lawmakers celebrate Diwali with ‘diyas’ on the Hill

U.S. lawmakers joined Indian-Americans for the first ever Diwali celebrations on Capitol Hill after the U.S. Congress passed resolutions honoring the Indian festival of lights and celebrating the strong relationship between India and the U.S.

The festivities on Capitol Hill on October 29 were marked by about 25 lawmakers, both Democrats and Republicans, joining in the lighting of traditional *diyas* or lamps amidst chanting of Vedic mantras by a Hindu priest. Lawmakers were welcomed to the event with a red *tilak* on the forehead and a jasmine garland. A Hindu priest presented them traditional shawls.

“I have come here to say Happy Diwali,” said Nancy Pelosi, former Speaker and Leader of the Democratic Party in the House.

“United States owes a great debt of

gratitude to India,” she said, “because our civil rights movement was built on the non-violent movement in India.”

“This is a truly historic event,” said Joe Crowley, Democrat Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, who organized the celebrations with his Republican counterpart Peter Roskam.

“You have the ability to bring together people from both sides of the aisle in ways that are powerful and significant,” said Roskam referring to the “incredible influence” of the Indian diaspora.

Starting his speech with “Jai Hind”, Ed Royce, Republican Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee said their goal should be to strengthen and deepen India-U.S. relationship.

Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu American member of the U.S. House, calling it a “celebration of righteousness”, said the diversity in the Congress was indicative of the special nature of Diwali itself.

Ami Bera, the only Indian American member of the U.S. House, called it an “incredible celebration” and expressed hope there would be more lawmakers from the diaspora at Diwali celebrations in the not too distant a future.

Separate bipartisan Diwali resolutions adopted by the two chambers of the Congress honored “an important tradition of Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains in the flourishing Indian-American community in the United States as well as those of our partners in India”.

The Senate resolution, introduced by Mark Warner and John Cornyn, Democratic and Republican Co-Chairs of the Senate India Caucus, supports a “strong relationship between the people and governments of the U.S. and India”.

The House resolution introduced by Crowley and Peter Roskam, expressed deep respect for Indian-Americans and the Indian diaspora and appreciated the religious diversity in both India and the U.S. and throughout the world.

## White House celebrates Guru Nanak birth anniversary

Sikh-Americans in their traditional Punjabi dresses, colorful turbans and business suits came to the White House to celebrate the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru.

Senior officials led by Melissa Rogers, Special Assistant to the President and Executive Director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, greeted the invitees to the event on November 20.

Among them was Taranjit Singh Sandhu, India’s Charge d’Affaires, who conveyed Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh’s ‘Gurpurb’ greetings to the audience.

Congressman Joe Crowley, Co-Chair of the House Caucus on India and Indian Americans, and Gautam Raghavan, Advisor, White House Office of Public Engagement, also addressed the meeting.

President Barack Obama, on November 15, had greeted “Sikh friends” around the world on the birth anniversary of Sikhism’s founder saying Sikh values of pluralism were also “central to who we are as Americans.”

### Statement by President Barack Obama on the Anniversary of the Birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji

“I want to extend my best wishes to all our Sikh friends, across the United States and around the world, who this weekend are observing the anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Sikh Guru.

This sacred time is an occasion to reflect on Guru Nanak’s timeless teachings and the principles that are at the heart of Sikhism, including the equality of all human beings, the pluralism we cherish in diverse societies and the compassion we owe one another.

Here in the United States, we’re grateful to the many Sikh Americans who give life to these values and enrich our country every day, reminding us that these shared principles are not only at the heart of the Sikh faith, they are central to who we are as Americans.”

## Diwali celebrations at Embassy



**D**iwali function was celebrated in the Embassy on November 8. About 100 members of the overseas Indian community participated in the celebration. In a reflection of the importance attached to India-U.S. relations, and to the Indian-American community and the celebration of Diwali, the United States Senate passed a unanimous resolution “Recognizing the religious and historical significance of the festival of Diwali” on November 4. The Resolution was sponsored by the

Co-Chair of Senate India Caucus and a steadfast champion of India-U.S. relations, Senator Mark Warner of Virginia. Mark Brunner, Senator Warner’s Senior Advisor presented the Senate Resolution.

Dr. B.N. Hebbar, Professor at the George Washington University gave a speech on the significance of Diwali.

Arjun Jaipuri, a prominent Indian Ghazal singer, songwriter and musician presented bhajans/songs accompanied on the Tabla by Abhijeet Panse.



1. Counselor Shiv Ratan welcoming the guests at the Diwali celebrations hosted at the Embassy on November 8.
2. Ambassador Nirupama Rao, who graced the occasion by her brief visit, greeting the gathering on the occasion of Diwali.
3. Charge d’Affaires Taranjit Singh Sandhu addressing the gathering.
4. Invocation song by children from Sri Venkateswara Lotus temple.
5. Mark Brunner, Senior Advisor to Senator Mark Warner making his remarks during the event.



6. Mark Brunner, Senior Advisor to Senator Mark Warner presenting to Charge d' Affaires Sandhu the "Senate Resolution on Diwali". In a reflection of the importance attached to the India-U.S. relations, and to the Indian-American community and the celebration of Diwali, the United States Senate passed a unanimous Resolution "Recognizing the religious and historical significance of the festival of Diwali" on November 4. The Resolution was sponsored by the Co-Chair of Senate India Caucus and a steadfast champion of India-U.S. relations, Senator Mark Warner of Virginia.
7. Dr. B.N. Hebbar, Professor, George Washington University speaking on the significance of Diwali.
8. Gautam Raghavan, Public Engagement Advisor, White House making his remarks.
9. Rendering of bhajans by Arjun Jaipuri, Founder and Director of Welcome Theatre Group, accompanied by Abhijeet Panse on Tabla.
10. Jeremy Woodrum, Legislative Director to Congressman Jim Crowley speaking on the occasion.
11. Vasanthi Aharam, President, United Hindu and Jain Temples proposing the vote of thanks.
12. Guests in attendance.

## 'An Evening To Cherish Ramayana, the Great India Epic'

As part of the 'Performing India Series-11', the Embassy organized an event to cherish and celebrate Ramayana, the great Indian Epic at the Embassy, presenting a talk on 'Performance of Ramayana in a Global Context' and several dance and music performances by the artists of Shriram Bhartiya Kala Kendra (SRKK), New Delhi, on November 9.

Bharat Bhargava, a prominent community member, spoke on 'The Inherent Meaning of Ramayana and its Relevance Today'.





The event was also a ‘curtain raiser’ to the ‘Ramayana: A Dance Drama’ performed by the SRKK artists at Schlesinger Concert Hall and Art Center, Virginia, organized by the Global Performing Arts. Manjula Kumar, Project Director, Smithsonian Institution and President and Executive Director, Global Performing Arts, also spoke on the occasion. At the beginning of the event, Counselor M. Sridharan introduced the event to the guests elaborating on the historical background of Ramayana and its continued significance and relevance to this day.



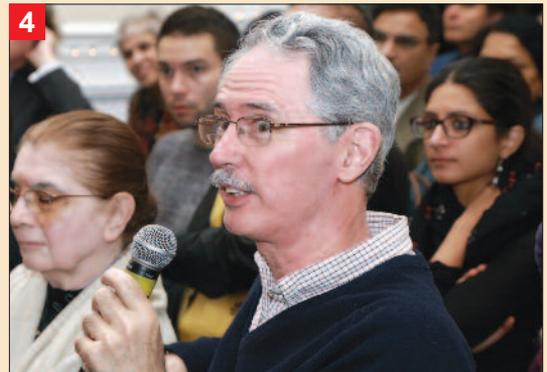
1. Manjula Kumar, Project Director, Smithsonian Institution and President & Executive Director, Global Performing Arts welcoming the guests and sharing her remarks at the event “An Evening To Cherish Ramayana, the Great India Epic”, hosted by the Embassy on November 9. The event was a curtain-raiser to “Ramayana: A Dance Drama” presentation in Washington, D.C. by Shriram Bhartiya Kala Kendra on November 10.
2. Bhajan singer Sonia Dhingra rendering Rama Bhajan on the occasion.
3. Bharat Bhargava speaking on ‘The Inherent Meaning of Ramayana and its Relevance Today’.
4. Sharda Prasad Misra of Shriram Bhartiya Kala Kendra speaking on the ‘Performance of Ramayana in a Global Context’.
5. Shashidharan Nair, Choreographer of “Ramayana: A Dance Drama” speaking on the occasion.
- 6,7,8. Dance and music presentation by Shashidharan Nair and the entire troupe.
9. Counselor M. Sridharan and Manjula Kumar, Project Director, Smithsonian Institution and President & Executive Director, Global Performing Arts with the artists.
10. Guests in attendance.

## India after English: A Talk by Sharmila Sen



As part of its 'Understanding India Series - 9', the Embassy, in association with the 'Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington D.C.', organized a Talk titled 'India After English' by Sharmila Sen, the Editor-at-Large at Harvard University Press, at the Embassy on November 25. Her Talk touched upon introduction of English text in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in India, its effects on Indian languages, place of English in India today, and the place of Indian English in the world and highlighted what conversations does one miss if English is used as the sole channel to understand India.

The Talk was followed by a 'Q & A' session with Sen, which was coordinated by Counselor M. Sridharan. She interacted with the audience and answered their question relating the subject matter of her talk. The Center for Hellenic Studies was represented by Douglas Frame, its Associate Director and other functionaries. The event was attended by about 120 guests, including those from Indian and local media, Embassies and Universities and British Council.



1. Counselor M. Sridharan welcoming the guests at a special event "India after English", a Talk by Sharmila Sen, Executive Editor-at-Large, Harvard University Press, hosted by the Embassy as part of its

"Reading India" series on November 25.  
2. Dr. Douglas Frame, Associate Director Emeritus, Harvard University Center for Hellenic Studies introducing Sharmila Sen to the audience.

3. Sharmila Sen delivering the talk "India After English".  
4,5. Interactive discussion session with Sharmila Sen.  
6. Guests in attendance.

## An Exhibit of Textiles by Laura Kina and Shelly Jyoti

As part of 'Beholding India Series - 7', the Embassy in association with 'Gandhi Memorial Centre' Bethesda, organized a textile exhibition "INDIGO" by Shelly Jyoti and Laura Kina at the Gandhi Memorial Centre' Bethesda on November 16. Carrie Trybulec, Director of Gandhi Memorial Centre, welcomed the guests and the exhibition was inaugurated by Charges d'Affaires Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu who also addressed the guests. Laura Kina is Associate Professor of Art, media and Design and Vincent De Paul Professor at De Paul University in Chicago and Shelly Jyoti is a New Delhi-based fashion designer and independent curator. Exhibition was partly sponsored by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). About 150 visitors attended this inaugural function. The exhibition will remain open to the public till end of January, 2014.



1. Charge d'Affaires Taranjit Singh Sandhu lighting the lamp to inaugurate "INDIGO: An Exhibit of Textiles" by Laura Kina and Shelly Jyoti at the Gandhi Memorial Center, Bethesda, Maryland on November 16. Carrie Trybulec, Director, Gandhi Memorial Center is also seen.
2. Charge d'Affaires Sandhu addressing the guests.
3. Laura Kina addressing the gathering.
4. Priyam Jyoti, daughter of Shelly Jyoti addressing the guests.
5. Charge d'Affaires Sandhu viewing the exhibits.
6. Exhibit of textiles by Laura Kina and Shelly Jyoti.
7. Visitors at the exhibition.

## Consulate General of India in New York

### Rajesh Paranjape lights up Diwali celebration with his classical music



The Consulate General of India in New York celebrated Diwali by organizing an Indian classical vocal music concert of Rajesh Paranjape, a renowned Indian classical vocalist at the Consulate Ballroom on November 5.

After Consul Sugandh Rajaram welcomed the guests, Consul General

Ambassador Dnyaneshwar Mulay extended his Diwali greetings to the gathering.

Rajesh Paranjape who is a disciple of Shri Ram Deshpande and Pandit Yashwantbua Joshi, a doyen of Gwalior *gharana*, excels in Gwalior as well as Jaipur and Agra style of *gayaki*. He has performed in several music festivals across India and abroad.

During the concert, Paranjape performed an evening *raaga* (melody) followed by *tarana* (fast composition), *abhangas* (devotional composition) and ended the presentation with *raaga Bhairavi*. He was accompanied on harmonium by Andrew Shantz who is an accomplished pianist and a jazz musician. Anil Khare accompanied on Tabla.

## Consulate General of India in Houston

### Visit to Little Rock, Arkansas



1. From left, David Delie, President, Welspun Tubular LLC; P. Harish, Consul General; and Welspun Tubular LLC Senior Vice President, Commercial and Business Development, Rajesh Chokhani at Welspun Tubular LLC Plant, Little Rock, Arkansas on November 13.

2. Consul General P. Harish with Dr. Joel E. Anderson, Chancellor, University of Arkansas at Little Rock on November 13.

3. Consul General P. Harish called on Mike Beebe, Governor of the State of Arkansas during his visit to Little Rock on November 13.

## Consulate General of India in Chicago

### U.S.-India Business Forum in Chicagoland

To educate and inform the international business community and the Chamber members in the Chicagoland area on the latest developments of business, investment and opportunities of doing business with India, the Consulate General of India in Chicago in partnership with the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and Etihad Airways, organized a U.S. - India Business Forum on November 6.

The event also explored how to capitalize on the opportunities of India's domestic growth and consumption and its increasing inbound and outbound investments to gain market share.

Consul General Dr. Ausaf Sayeed



From left: Ranjana Khanna, Deputy Secretary General of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI); Dr. Ajit Pant, Founder and Member, Board of Directors US India Chamber of Commerce, Midwest; Dr. Ausaf Sayeed, Consul General of India in Chicago; Michael J. Fieweger, Chair of Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce Global Connections Council, Partner of Baker & McKenzie LLP; and Denise E. Harvil, Vice President, Central USA, Etihad Airways.

was the keynote speaker at the Forum. Ranjana Khan, Deputy Secretary General of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and Ajit Pant,

Founder Member of US India Chamber of Commerce were the other speakers. Leading business professionals of Chicagoland area attended the event.

### US India Chamber of Commerce Meeting



Consul General presenting the keynote speech at US-India Chamber of Commerce event.

With a view to discussing strategies to promote business between India and the U.S. and connecting smaller vendors to larger international enterprises and vice versa, Consul General Dr. Ausaf Sayeed met with members of US India Chamber of Commerce Midwest at the Consulate premises on November 11. US India Chamber of Commerce appraised Consul General on their roadmap for the coming year.

### Consul General at Oak Creek Gurdwara

Consul General of India in Chicago Dr. Ausaf Sayeed inaugurated an exhibition titled 'The Sikhs — A Heritage of Valor and Devotion' by renowned photo artist Sondeep Shankar at the Oak Creek Gurdwara, where several innocent lives were lost in August 2012 shooting, on November 3. The week-long photo exhibition was sponsored by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and co hosted by Consulate General of India, Chicago and Oak Creek Gurdwara in Wisconsin.



Consul General Dr. Ausaf Sayeed at the Oak Creek Gurdwara.

### Delegation from India meets business leaders of automotive industry in Detroit

Consulate General of India, Chicago in association with law firm MillerCanfield in Michigan arranged a breakfast meeting of business leaders of automotive industry in Detroit region with over a dozen automotive business delegates from India. Sector focus for the discussion was automotive components, engineering and textile.

### Vivekananda Memorial Program for Museum Excellence

An 11-member team comprising of Directors and Fellows visited Art Institute of India, Chicago to participate in the "Vivekananda Memorial Program for Museum Excellence" this year. India had signed an MOU with prestigious Art Institute of Chicago for "Vivekananda Memorial Program for Museum Excellence".

# India opens women-focused bank

India on November 19 opened its first women-focused bank called "Bharatiya Mahila Bank" with a view to enhance banking services to the fairer sex nearly three-fourths of whom currently don't have bank accounts.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh inaugurated the first bank at the Air India building in Nariman Point, Mumbai. Another six branches were inaugurated through video-conferencing.

"The Bank will initially have seven branches, which will go up to 25 by March 2014, and will focus equally on rural and urban areas," the Prime Minister said in his inaugural speech at the event.

"It will offer special products keeping in view the needs of women entre-



Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh presents the new account kit to the first account holder, at the inauguration of the first branch of Bharatiya Mahila Bank Limited, in Mumbai on November 19.

preneurs. It is a challenging task ahead for those who have been given the responsibility of beginning the operations of this Bank and nurturing it in its initial years," he said.

"But it is also a meaningful and ful-

filling endeavor which they have been entrusted with," the Prime Minister added.

It will primarily serve women but later deposits will also be taken from men.

Usha Ananthasubramanian, who was Executive Director of Punjab National Bank, is the Chairperson of the bank.

The Government had announced about the opening of the bank in the annual budget for 2013-14 fiscal presented in February.

Addressing the opening session, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said Bharatiya Mahila Bank would be a universal bank and would provide every banking service and facility that is provided by comparable public and private sector banks.

## India's current account deficit falls to \$5.2 billion in Q2

India's current account deficit declined to \$5.2 billion in July-September quarter of the current financial year as compared to \$21 billion recorded in the corresponding quarter of last year, on the back of rise in exports and decline in gold imports, Government data showed on December 2.

As proportion of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), the current account deficit during the quarter under review is 1.2 percent, sharply down from 5 percent recorded in the corresponding quarter in 2012-13, according to data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The current account deficit (CAD) was recorded at 4.9 percent of the country's GDP in the April-June quarter of the current financial year.

"The lower CAD was primarily on account of a decline in the trade deficit as merchandise exports picked up and imports moderated, particularly gold imports," the RBI said.

## Indian economy grows 4.8 percent in Q2

Helped by the good performance of the farm and some infrastructure sectors, India's economic growth recovered marginally to 4.8 percent in the second quarter of the current financial year from 4.4 percent recorded in the previous quarter, Government data showed on November 29.

According to data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), the agriculture sector registered healthy growth of 4.6 percent, while manufacturing expanded at 1 percent in the July-September quarter.

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth for the first six months of the current financial year stands at 4.6 percent.

This is the fourth consecutive quarter of economic growth below 5 percent. The growth had slumped to 4.4 percent in the April-June quarter.

The quarterly GDP at factor cost at constant (2004-05) prices for the second quarter of 2013-14 is esti-



mated at ₹13.68 trillion against ₹13.05 trillion in the corresponding quarter of last year, translating into a growth rate of 4.8 percent year-on-year, the CSO said.

The economic activities which registered significant growth in during the quarter under review include agriculture, forestry and fishing at 4.6 percent; electricity, gas and water supply at 7.7 percent; construction at 4.3 percent; financing, insurance, real estate and business services at 10 percent and community, social and personal services at 4.2 percent.

## 'Innovation critical to enhance India's competitive edge'

India's biggest strength would be its demographic dividend, President Pranab Mukherjee said on November 19 and noted that innovation was critical to enhance the country's competitive advantage in an increasingly globalized world.

Speaking at a function at Rashtrapati Bhavan after receiving third year's "Report to the People" of National Innovation Council, the President said knowledge and innovation were the twin pillars on which the country will prosper in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

"Innovation is crucial to enhance competitiveness in an increasingly globalized world. In Indian context, it is critical," the President said.

He said innovation should be used to meet challenges in sectors such as health, education and housing.

Innovation should be applied "not only to generate solutions but to make development process more inclusive", he said. Noting that India's biggest strength is going to be demographic dividend, the President said innovation in education, skill



President Pranab Mukherjee addressing after receiving the third annual 'Report to the People' of the National Innovation Council, at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi on November 19.

development and entrepreneurship could help the youth of the country emerge as workforce for India and also the world.

President Mukherjee said India should use innovation as ladder to become a developed country and called upon all citizens to be part of the "innovation movement".

## India building border infra: Home Minister Shinde

India is developing border infrastructure along the neighboring countries to bring the people closer by boosting trade and economy, Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde said in Tripura's capital Agartala on November 17.

"India would build 13 international standard ICPs (Integrated Check Posts) along the borders with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar to boost trade and economy with the neighboring countries," Minister Shinde said after opening the ICP at Akhaura near Agartala on Bangladesh border.

He said: "Ties between India and Bangladesh would never snap but strengthen in future. India-Bangladesh relationship is exemplary time-tested relationship. These ties were initiated by Indira Gandhi (India's late Prime Minister) and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (founding father and then President and Prime Minister of Bangladesh)."

The Home Minister said India was committed to support Bangladesh so that the two friendly countries grow together for the benefit of the people.

"With the building of ICPs, people-to-people contacts would be further strengthened," he said, adding the ICP along the Petrapole-Benapole check post in West Bengal would be ready by next year.

## Efforts on to give greater confidence to investors: FM

Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on November 21 made a strong pitch for investments from the diaspora saying the government was taking steps to stabilize the economy and give greater confidence to investors.

Addressing the second South Asian diaspora convention in Singapore, Minister Chidambaram said the Government is mindful of the fact that investment will determine economic growth and has taken a number of steps to boost confidence of domestic as well as foreign investors.

"We have taken a number of measures to stabilize the economy and give



Finance Minister P. Chidambaram responding to the audience in a special session at the South Asian Diaspora Convention 2013 in Singapore.

greater confidence to the investors," the Finance Minister said.

"Last year, after I returned to the Ministry of Finance, I announced a new fiscal consolidation path under

which the fiscal deficit would be contained at 5.3 percent in 2012-13 and reduced every year until it reached 3 percent in 2016-17," Minister Chidambaram said adding that the target was surpassed as the fiscal deficit was contained at 4.9 percent.

He said for the current financial year he had "drawn a red line" at the original target of 4.8 percent and made it clear that the red line would not be breached under any circumstances.

"The key to sustain a high growth rate is investment. Other factors are also important. The fiscal deficit must be contained below the widely-accepted norm of 3 percent of GDP," he said.

## India most attractive investment destination: EY

India has spurred ahead of China and the U.S. as the most attractive investment destination, a survey by global professional services firm Ernst & Young (EY) says.

EY's ninth bi-annual capital confidence barometer, based on a survey of 1,600 senior executives across more than 70 countries, has ranked India as the most attractive investment destination followed by Brazil, while China is at third place.

The top three investing countries into India are the U.S., France and Japan. Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) from the U.S., France and Japan during the period April 2000 to August 2013 amounted to ₹536.73 billion, ₹177.18 billion and ₹718.7 billion, respectively.

"With sharp currency depreciation and opening up of FDI in various sectors, India has become an attractive destination for foreign investors," the EY report said.

Sectors with the highest level of possible deals include automotive, technology, life sciences and consumer products. The report said 38 percent of the respondents feel that M&As volumes in India are expected to improve over the next 12 months.

## New initiative on biomass stoves launched

A new initiative that will help reduce the cost of improved stove technologies to rural customers through the sale of carbon credits was launched on November 26.

The initiative was developed under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the United Nations Frameworks Convention on Climate Change.

"Increased use of clean and efficient cookstove is crucial to reduce the burden of disease from indoor air pollution as well to avoid the overuse of biomass resources," said New and Renewable Energy Minister Farooq Abdullah.

"Efficient cooking technologies have a direct tangible impact on the livelihoods of the poor, as they save time and money that previously had to be spent on procuring cooking fuels," he said.

## India gets third Boeing maritime patrol aircraft

India has received its third P-8I maritime patrol aircraft from Boeing company, enhancing the country's long-range maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

The P-8I features open system architecture, advanced sensor and display technologies, and a worldwide base of suppliers, parts and support equipment, according to Boeing which is building eight of them for India.

"The P-8I incorporates not only India-unique design features, but also India-built subsystems that are tailored to the country's maritime patrol requirements," Boeing said in a statement on November 22.



The third Boeing P-8I long-range maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare aircraft for the Indian Navy. Photo Credit: Boeing photo

The first P-8I was delivered to India in May and the second on November 15. Based on Boeing's Next-Generation 737 commercial airplane, the P-8I is the Indian Navy variant of the P-8A Poseidon that Boeing has developed for the U.S. Navy.

## Ratan Tata elected to East-West Centre board

Noted Indian business leader Ratan N. Tata has been elected to the Board of Governors of the East-West Centre, a U.S. think tank promoting better relations and understanding among people of the U.S. and Asia Pacific.

Tata, Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons, was returning to the board after serving several terms between 1993 and 2004, the Hawaii-based center announced on November 18. He takes the place of Tarun Das, former Chief Mentor of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Tata was elected with Takeshi Niinami, CEO of Japan's Lawson, Inc. Both will serve three-year terms.

Tata, who headed the Indian industrial powerhouse the Tata Group until his retirement in 2012, chairs two of the largest private-sector philanthropic trusts in India and is a member of the Indian Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry. He also serves on the



Ratan Tata.

Board of Trustees of Cornell University and the University of Southern California, as well as the Board of Directors of Alcoa, among numerous other board positions.

Established by the U.S. Congress in 1960, the East West Centre serves as a resource for information and analysis on critical issues of common concern, bringing people together to exchange views, build expertise, and develop policy options.

## Indian-Americans enhance political footprints in U.S.

As part of a growing trend of political empowerment for the three million-strong Indian American community, five Indian-American candidates scored victories in November 5 U.S. elections, with three of them becoming legislators in two states and two winning elections to local bodies.

The most significant gains for the Indian American community came in New Jersey where Kolkata-born Raj Mukherji scored a victory in the 33<sup>rd</sup> district to join fellow Democrat Upendra Chivukula, who retained his 17<sup>th</sup> district seat, in the state assembly.

While Mukherji, 29, a former Jersey City Deputy Mayor and current Chairman of the Jersey City Housing Authority, is entering the state legislature for the first time, India-born Chivukula, 63, has been a member of



From left, Raj Mukherji, Latha Mangipudi and Upendra Chivukula.

the New Jersey assembly since 2002.

In another notable victory by an Indian-American, Democrat Latha Mangipudi upset Pete Silva with an 18-point margin to become New Hampshire's state representative from Ward 8. In the local elections,

Democrat Sapana Shah won a berth on the Edison Municipal Council in New Jersey, while Steve Rao retained his seat on the Morrisville, North Carolina City Council, remaining as the only Indian-American on the Council. — IANS

## All the President's 'Desi' men and women

As Nisha Desai Biswal officially became Washington's first Indian-American pointperson for South and Central Asia last week, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry mentioned that she is known as "somebody who speaks softly and carries a big stick".

"This week in Bangladesh, Nisha showed how she never misses a chance to speak up or stand up for America's values," Secretary Kerry said, recalling her meetings with both Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Opposition leader Khaleda Zia.

He called Biswal's story a "great American" story "of a woman who left a small town in India at age 6 to come to America and now becomes one of the most important leaders in the Department of State as Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia".

But it's now becoming an increasingly common story as President Barack Obama has turned to more and more accomplished Indian-Americans

### In high positions

**Nisha Desai Biswal:** Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia.

**Atul Keshap:** Deputy Assistant Secretary of State.

**Dr. Vivek Hallegere Murthy:** US Surgeon General.

**Rajiv Shah:** Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

**Puneet Talwar:** Assistant Secretary of State for political military affairs.

**Vikram J. Singh:** Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for South and Southeast Asia.

**Sri Srinivasan:** Judge of the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

**Arun M. Kumar:** Assistant Secretary and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service, International Trade Administration, Department of Commerce.

**Gargee Ghosh:** Member of the President's Global Development Council.

**Kal Penn:** Member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

to take up key jobs from arts to science to commerce to diplomacy.

President Barack Obama named Vinai Thummalapally as the U.S. Ambassador to Belize. Son of a retired scientist who worked for Andhra Pradesh Forensic Sciences Laboratory, he is the first Indian American Ambassador in U.S. history.

In September, President Obama nominated Puneet Talwar, a noted Indian-American Middle East policy specialist to a key diplomatic post as the Assistant Secretary of state for political military affairs.

In the Pentagon, the highest ranking Indian American is Vikram J. Singh, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for South and Southeast Asia. He serves as the principal advisor on development and implementation of defense strategies and plans for the region, including India.

President Obama has more Indian-Americans serving in his administration than any of his predecessors. — IANS

## Basic science research getting its due: C.N.R. Rao

**B**asic science research is getting its due now, said eminent scientist C.N.R. Rao on being conferred the nation's highest civilian award Bharat Ratna by the Government on November 16.

"I spoke to the Prime Minister (Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh) and thanked him for the honor. I feel basic science is getting its due now," Rao said.

Expressing profound happiness for being chosen for the prestigious award, Rao said more students should earnestly take up science research.

"I credit my family and thousands of my students for this award. I am also happy that batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar has also been conferred with the award, Rao added.

"India's future is linked with science. More investments will enable the youth to look at science as an important area



Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with Bharat Ratna awardee and eminent scientist CNR Rao at his residence in Bangalore

of work for a great future," Rao said a day after he was conferred the country's highest civilian award.

"In the last 8-10 years, India has

done a lot of good things in science. Five new institutes of science have been set up in Bhopal, Chandigarh, Kolkata, Pune and Thiruvananthapuram. They are going to be centers of excellence for future science. The government is also investing about ₹100 billion in setting up massive computer centers in Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai and other cities as we are as good as the U.S. or China in computers," Rao pointed out.

On technology overtaking science, Rao said unlike in the olden days, technology was developing faster than modern science and the time gap between research and innovation has shortened, especially in nanotechnology where research was turning into technology in a year.

Rao has served the country for many decades and published over 1,600 scientific papers till date.

## Pioneering Indian astronomer welcomes India's telescope quest

**I**ndian-origin astronomer in Texas, who was one of the first humans to glimpse the Universe's most distant galaxy, is hopeful about the future of science in India and about India pitching in to build the world's largest telescope.

"I am optimistic about the future of science and education in India," Goan-born Vithal Tilvi told *IANS*, adding that investing in these spheres always reaped prosperity.

A post-doctoral research associate at Texas A&M University, Tilvi also lauded the Indian government's initiative to invest, along with Canada, Japan, China and the U.S., in large facilities like the world's largest optical and infra-red telescope that spans 30 metres.



Vithal Tilvi

Tilvi was part of a team headed by noted astronomer Steven Finkelstein which sighted the new galaxy z8\_GND\_5296. They caught sight of it in infra-red light, after its light bounced off the orbiting Hubble Space telescope and a Hawaiian observatory after travelling 13.1 billion years. The implications of this discovery are huge, says the astronomer.

"Apart from making a world record as the most-distant galaxy in the universe humankind has ever seen, such galaxies give us a glimpse of the universe when it was young. Because light takes some finite amount of time to travel, we are seeing this galaxy as it was 13 billion years ago," Tilvi said.

## Indian scientist Anil Rajvanshi gets Florida varsity award

**D**istinguished Indian agricultural scientist Anil K. Rajvanshi has been selected for the Distinguished Alumnus Award of the University of Florida, one of America's leading universities.



Anil Rajvanshi

Rajvanshi, Director of the Nimbkar Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) at Phaltan, Maharashtra, is the first Indian to receive the award.

This is the highest recognition for the university alumni, for making "a positive difference in their communities".

Rajvanshi has been given this award for his pioneering work in rural development done at NARI since 1981. Rajvanshi will receive the award from the UF President at the commencement convocation on May 3 next year in Gainesville, Florida.



## Indian culinary tours beckon foreign foodies

Whether it is the age-old Mughlai fare of old Delhi, ethereal dishes of rural Rajasthan or the fishy affair in West Bengal, the Indian food-travel trail runs deep and offers innumerable surprises

**W**ant to combine wanderlust with a desire to sample authentic Indian dishes in traditional kitchens or scenic spots across the country? As a personal touch, you could also shop for the ingredients in some of the vibrant and bustling open-air marketplaces that India offers. All this and more could be yours for a price — thanks to the genre of culinary tourism. As gourmands from Britain, the U.S., Scandinavia, Europe and Africa troop into India to experience its food culture, tour groups and exclusive food travel consultants have come up with special packages to offer the best of the country's food regime.

Whether it is the age-old Mughlai fare of old Delhi, rustic dishes of rural Rajasthan or the

quintessentially fishy affair in West Bengal, the Indian food-travel trail runs deep and promises to throw up surprises.

Mexico resident and global traveler Katja Gaskell, Co-Founder of *globetotting.com*, an online travel portal that caters to families, has designed a nine-day tour of Rajasthan for families that includes “a jeep safari and picnic lunch in rural Rajasthan, a royal dinner in a magnificent fort setting and cooking lessons with a local family where you’ll learn how to create your own Rajasthani meal”.

“This nine-day holiday explores the

history and culture behind some of the region’s most celebrated dishes and will teach visitors that there’s more to Indian cuisine than simply chapattis and curries,” Gaskell said.

While a fitting rural setting is the draw for tourists from Britain, picking out fish and exotic produce like yam lures gastronomes to narrow their narrow alleys of southern Kolkata’s Jadubabur Bazar or Lake market.

Tailored for them is an offbeat walking tour offered by Calcutta Walks, a city-based walking tour company.

In the “Bengali Cooking Lessons” tour, enthusiasts can learn the art of making Bengali staples like *loochi* (leavened round flour bread), *chholar daal* (Bengal gram curry), rice dishes, Bengali chicken curry or *jhol* (broth) and vegetarian items like *baingun bhaja* (eggplant fritters).



## IFFI: Celebrating the best of world cinema

The best director award was given to Kaushik Ganguly for his film *Apur Panchali*, a smart tribute to the Oscar award-winning Indian director Satyajit Ray, at the 44th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa, which came to a close on November 30.

A Portuguese film *Beatriz's War*, set in East Timor, won the prestigious Golden Peacock award.

Directed by Luigi Acquisti and Bety Reis, the film was unanimously chosen by the jury for the award.

The film deals with intimate relationships between men and women against in East Timor.

Bengali film *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, directed by Kamaleswar Mukherjee won the Silver Peacock award. The film is based on the life and works of legendary Bengali film director Ritwik Ghatak.

Alon Moni Aboutboul won the Best Actor (male) award for his performance in the film *A Place in Heaven*, where his performance as a cruel and sensitive character was applauded.

The Best Actor (female) award was won by Magdalena Boczarska for her intense, strong portrayal of a victim who subtly turns an oppressor.

The Special Jury Award was granted to Onur Unlu, director of the film *Thou Gilds't The Even*.

Speaking on the occasion, Union



Governor of Goa Bharat Vir Wanchoo presenting the Golden Peacock award for best film to the East Timor Film *Beatriz's War* directed by Luigi Acqisto and Bety Reis.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Manish Tewari said that 44th IFFI was a celebration of freedom of the human spirit, liberated from the mores of conventionalism, imbued with the ability to dare and above all the power of a 'New Idea'. Talking about the initiatives taken over the past one year, he said, the first and foremost is the single window mechanism that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has put in place to allow and facilitate film makers from abroad to come and shoot in India in any part

of the country with convenience. He added that the same mechanism has been extended to domestic film producers also.

Justin Chadwick's film *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* was the closing film of the festival. The film is based on anti-apartheid revolutionary Nelson Mandela's autobiographic book, *Long Walk to Freedom*. The film chronicles his life from his childhood in a rural village to his emergence as the first democratically elected President of South Africa.

### 'Keen to be part of change in Indian cinema'

Actor Ajay Devgn, who has partnered with Brillstein Entertainment Partners to launch a U.S.-based production house Shivalaya Entertainment to back independent films targeting a global audience, says he is excited to be part of the changing scenario in the Hindi film industry.

The development and financing outfit will focus on independent films which will aim for broad appeal.

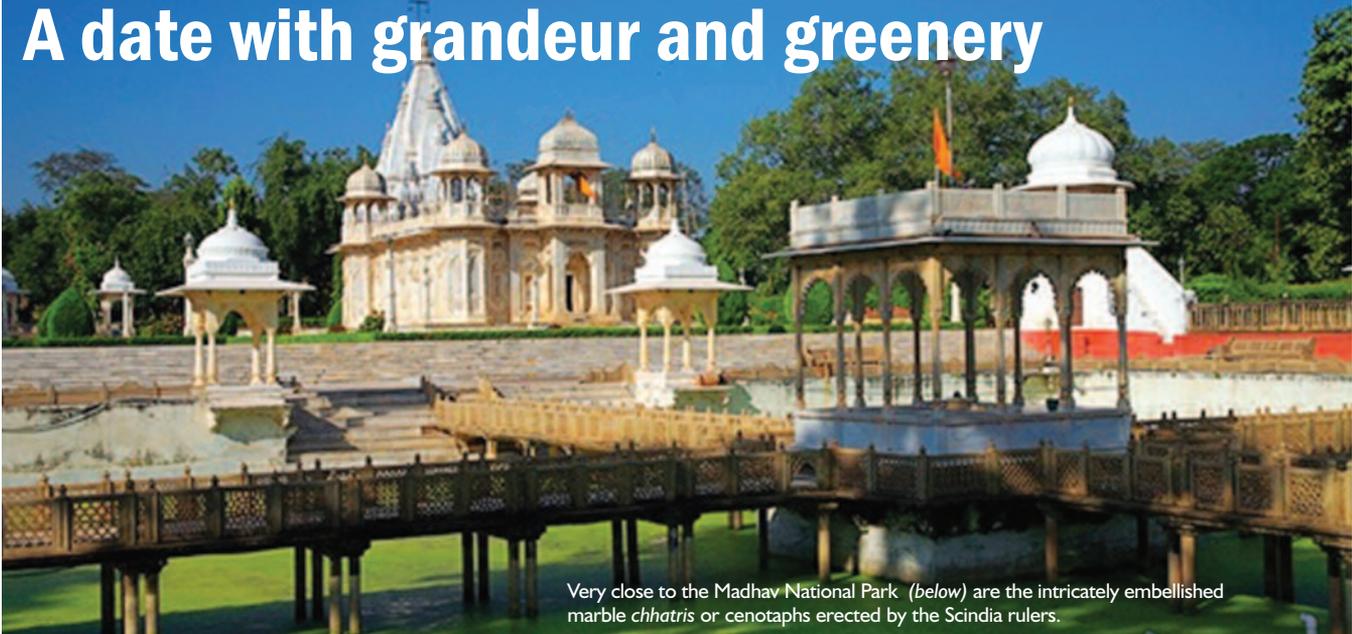
"At one end, traditional films continue to entertain and make business sense. At the other, there is a resounding presence of some new forms and voices making a mark in this ever expanding medium. I am

keen to be part of that growth, that change," Ajay said in a statement.

"I am coming forth to support the independent film process where we can share important stories that need to be told — global stories that will resonate with international audiences," added the actor, who has another production banner titled Ajay Devgn Films Productions. Shivalaya Entertainment, based in Los Angeles, has given the green signal to its first film *Parched*, to be directed by Leena Yadav.



# SHIVPURI: A date with grandeur and greenery



Very close to the Madhav National Park (below) are the intricately embellished marble *chhatris* or cenotaphs erected by the Scindia rulers.

Summer capital of the erstwhile Scindia rulers, the splendid landscape, rich wildlife and the architectural marvels make Shivpuri a wonderful holiday destination

About 120 km from the city of Gwalior lies the small town of Shivpuri. To say that it is a picturesque place would be a gross understatement. With its undulating hills, thick vegetation and rich wildlife, this was the perfect summer resort capital of the Scindia rulers of yore. Cut to the present and add some architectural marvels to it, and you have all the ingredients to make Shivpuri a great holiday destination.

Whether you take a train (the nearest station is Jhansi or Gwalior), or take a flight (to Gwalior), one has to take a road journey to eventually reach Shivpuri. And what a journey that is! The landscape is like a soothing balm to the eyes — gorges, hills, and plateau (your Geography lesson comes to life!) and endless greenery, the momentum broken momentarily by tiny streams. If it's in the monsoon that you are travelling, the freshness of the landscape is even more alluring.

One of the must-visits of Shivpuri is the Madhav National Park. Open throughout the year, the terrain of this

## How to reach

**AIR:** The closest airport is Gwalior, 120 km away, which has regular flights from Delhi and Bhopal.

**RAIL:** The nearest railheads are Jhansi (100 km) or Gwalior, on the Delhi-Chennai main line. Shivpuri is a railway station on the Dehradun-Ujjain route.

**ROAD:** Shivpuri is well connected by bus services to and from Gwalior, Bhopal, Jhansi, Ujjain and Indore.

**WHERE TO STAY:** Madhya Pradesh Tourism has a resort called Tourist Village nestling close to the Madhav National Park, whose tariff is `2,000 onwards. There are also budget hotels in Shivpuri which can be booked online.



156 sq.km. park is mixed, with hills, grassland, forests and lakes. The predominant species in this park is the deer, and of them the easily-sighted ones are the graceful little *chinkara*, the Indian gazelle and the *chital*. The nilgai is also easily spotted, as is the ubiquitous langur. Among the other animals who have their habitat in the park are the leopard, black buck, sloth bear, and the four-horned antelope.

“This park was earlier a part of the hunting ground of the kings. Tigers were bagged by royal *shikaris* (hunters). History says that herds of elephants were captured by the Mughal emperor Akbar. Now, of course, the animals are protected,” Diwan Singh, a guide at the park, told IANS.

The park also has rich avifauna and the artificial lake, Chandpata, is home to a variety of birds like migratory geese, cormorants, white breasted kingfishers and the likes.

What's more, a small but gushing waterfall offers an opportunity for fun and frolic for children in the park. ■

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