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Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh meeting U.S. Secretary of State John F. Kerry at the U.S. State Department on December 10, 2013. Photo: U.S. Department of State



AMBASSADOR DR. S. JAISHANKAR TAKES CHARGE

Cementing India-US ties

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India's new Ambassador to US Dr. S. Jaishankar presents copy of his Credentials to the State Department

Dr. Jaishankar, who succeeds Nirupama Rao, played a key role in negotiating the landmark India-U.S. civil nuclear deal and other initiatives

Dr. S. Jaishankar, India's new Ambassador to the United States presented a copy of his credentials to the U.S. State Department in Washington on December 26. He comes to Washington, D.C. with more than three decades of diplomatic experience.

Dr. Jaishankar, who succeeds Nirupama Rao, was the Ambassador of India to China from 2009 to 2013.

Dr. Jaishankar played a key role in negotiating the landmark India-U.S. civil nuclear deal and other initiatives.

Joining the Indian Foreign Service in 1977, Dr. Jaishankar has represented India's interests and fostered friendly working relationships in countries around the world.

Dr. Jaishankar's first postings abroad were as Third and Second Secretary (Political) at the Embassy of India in Moscow from 1979 to 1981. From 1981 to 1985, he served as Under Secretary (Americas) and Policy Planning in the Ministry of External Affairs. He then spent three years from 1985 to 1988 as First Secretary handling political affairs at the Indian Embassy in Washington, DC, followed by two years as First Secretary and Political Advisor to the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka.

In 1990, Dr. Jaishankar became Commercial Counsellor in Budapest. After three years in that position, he returned to India where he served first as Director of East Europe Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, and then as Press Secretary for the President of India. Following this service in India, Dr. Jaishankar went abroad again - to Tokyo in 1996 as Deputy Chief of Mission.

In the year 2000, he was appointed



DR. JAISHANKAR, WHO JOINED THE INDIAN FOREIGN SERVICE IN 1977, HOLDS PH.D. AND M.PHIL IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND AN M.A. IN POLITICAL SCIENCE. HE IS A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES IN LONDON

the Ambassador of India to Czech Republic and served in Prague till 2004.

Upon completing his time as Ambassador in Prague, Dr. Jaishankar returned once again to India, where he led the Americas Division in the Ministry of External Affairs. After heading the division for three years, he again left India in 2007 to serve as High Commissioner to Singapore for two years.

Dr. Jaishankar holds Ph.D. and M.Phil in International Relations and an M.A. in Political Science. He is a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

He is married to Kyoko Jaishankar and has two sons and a daughter.



Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh called on U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on December 10, 2013 at the U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.
Photo: U.S. Department of State

Cementing India-US ties

Foreign Secretary holds talk with US officials

From defense and energy to strategic security, the Indian Foreign Secretary discussed with U.S. officials a wide range of bilateral, regional and global issues

In a bid to advance the process of implementing the decisions made by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and U.S. President Barack Obama during Prime Minister Singh's successful visit to Washington in September 2013, Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh held a series of high-level meetings with top Obama Administration officials and lawmakers from both Democratic and Republican parties.

During her four-day visit to the

U.S., Foreign Secretary Singh, who arrived in Washington on December 8, held "exceedingly useful and very productive" discussions with the officials and lawmakers of the U.S.

Foreign Secretary Singh met with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William Burns on December 10. She also held meeting with the new Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Nisha Desai Biswal on the same day.

The Foreign Secretary discussed

cooperative partnerships in energy sector with Deputy Energy Secretary Daniel B. Poneman, ways to strengthen India-U.S. defense cooperation with Under Secretary of Defense for Policy James N. Miller, and strategic security issues with Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller. Foreign Secretary Singh also met with White House Deputy National Security Advisor Tony Blinken during her four-day visit.



The Indian Foreign Secretary with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William Burns at the U.S. Department of State on December 10, 2013. Photo: U.S. Department of State



Foreign Secretary Singh with U.S. Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller at the U.S. Department of State on December 11, 2013.



Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh meeting with Daniel B. Poneman, Deputy Secretary of Energy in Washington, D.C. on December 9, 2013. Photo U.S. Department of Energy



Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh meeting with The House Committee on Foreign Affairs chaired by Congressman Ed Royce on December 11, 2013.



From left, Charge d'Affaires Taranjit Singh Sandhu; Congressman Joe Crowley, Co-chair of House India Caucus; Congressman Eliot Engel, Ranking Member of The House Committee on Foreign Affairs; Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh; Congressman Peter Roskam, Co-chair of House India Caucus; and Congressman George Holding, Member, The House Committee on Foreign Affairs.



Foreign Secretary Singh meeting with U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel B. Poneman on December 9, 2013. Photo: U.S. Department of Energy

She had a telephonic conversation with Under Secretary for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman, who had to leave suddenly for Chicago for personal reasons.

On the Capitol Hill, she met with Senator Mark Warner, Co-Chair of the Senate India Caucus as also Chairmen and leading members of the Senate and House Foreign Affairs Panels besides key Congressional aides from both Republican and Democratic parties.

As State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki put it, the meetings, coming as a follow-up to Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's September Summit meeting with President Barack Obama focused on "ways to deepen the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership and consult on regional issues".

Issues of mutual concern and interest in areas of trade and investment were discussed. The Indian side flagged concerns about elements of the Senate version of the immigration bill that would adversely affect Indian IT companies.

During talks with Foreign Secretary Singh, the U.S. and India had also agreed to joint principles to strengthen India-U.S. cooperation on training UN peacekeepers.

The U.S. also accepted India's invitation to serve as a partner country for India's Technology Summit and Expo in New Delhi in the fall of 2014.

First India-US police chiefs conference concludes

India is committed to working as a partner with the U.S. in bringing and applying state-of-the-art technologies to crime prevention, crime detection, forensic analysis and traffic management to make cities safer, says Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde

Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde called for enhancing internal security through strategic partnership between India and the U.S. on December 4.

Inaugurating the first two-day India-U.S. Homeland Security dialogue — Police Chiefs Conference in New Delhi, Home Minister Shinde said the two countries were at the forefront in countering terrorism and international crime.

“We are also, unfortunately, the leading targets of such trans-national terror groups and crime syndicates. All too often, attacks are launched from across sovereign borders in a manner calculated to cause the greatest disruption of peace. It will have to be the endeavour of all countries to fight this menace in all its forms through partnerships based on genuine and result-oriented cooperation,” he said.

The Home Minister said the conference was a key element in the expansion of India’s bilateral cooperation with the United States.

“As strategic partners, the more we can work with each other to enhance internal security, the more meaningful our partnership becomes to the ordinary citizen,” he said.

Minister Shinde said India-U.S. Homeland Security Dialogue was an important element of the bilateral security architecture.

He said major terrorist attacks typically target large and densely populated urban areas. “Both our countries have lived through such terrorist carnage, during 9/11 in New York and during 26/11 in Mumbai. Cooperation



Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde lighting the lamp to inaugurate the India-U.S. Police Chiefs Conference, in New Delhi on December 4, 2013. Ambassador of U.S. in India Nancy J. Powell is also seen.

in megacity policing is intended to enhance capacity to provide an integrated security umbrella to megacities and large urban centers,” he said.

The Minister said an efficient megacity policing system must serve as an effective deterrent against terrorists and their masters who launch targeted attacks on the nerve centers of a country.

“Our objective must be to make our cities, and, therefore, our countries

safe by reducing our vulnerability to such challenges.”

He said technology was a key input for policing and the U.S. has consistently led the world in deploying technology in the service of its people.

“There is much that we can do together as partners to enhance the use of appropriate technologies for our police forces,” he said.

The Minister said India was committed to working as a partner with

the US in bringing and applying state-of-the-art technologies to crime prevention, crime detection, forensic analysis and traffic management to make cities safer.

“I urge technology partners from both countries to join hands with each other and with law enforcement agencies to deploy innovative technologies and enhance research in various fields of homeland security,” Minister Shinde said.

Delivering the valedictory address at the Conference, Home Secretary Anil Goswami said that the movement of people, goods and ideas has always driven with the development of nations and provided opportunities for economic growth and prosperity. He said that the security measures should be designed to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods while securing the critical infrastructure.

Goswami further said that the increasing use of digital networks and information and communication technology provides opportunities but also poses a security threat to data and computer systems. He said that there is a need for security co-operation between India and the U.S., which faces this challenge due to a larger number of computer and internet users in the two countries. In the area of cyber security, he emphasized the need to strengthen the security environment to facilitate e-commerce, e-banking and day-to-day activities covering the financial services, power industry, telecommunications industry and public services.

He expressed his satisfaction on the deliberations in the Conference which focused on the need for a healthy combination of technology, building security infrastructure and the need to synchronize the domestic laws with the global standards.

He said that the service providers play a very important role in the investigations of cyber crimes and most of the service providers are based in US. It would be important to strengthen the process of legal assistance so as to speed up the investigations and

MINISTER SHINDE SAID AN EFFICIENT MEGACITY POLICING SYSTEM MUST SERVE AS AN EFFECTIVE DETERRENT AGAINST TERRORISTS AND THEIR MASTERS WHO LAUNCH TARGETED ATTACKS ON THE NERVE CENTERS OF A COUNTRY

promote legal mechanisms that encourage co-operation in cyber crime matter, he added.

The Home Secretary said that the great potential exists for co-operation not only between the authorities of the two countries but also between the technology and business partners, who are expected to play a crucial role in finding technology enabled solutions to the unique challenges of modern policing.

Goswami said that the partnership in the areas of use of sophisticated technology, training and capacity building, forensics, solutions for chemicals, radiological, biological and nuclear threats, technological support system for underground metro stations tunnels, track security, behavior detection and IT solutions to manage security contingencies need to be further strengthened.

During the two day Conference, seven brainstorming sessions covering Response to Mass Casualty Event; Maritime security and Law enforcement (passengers and Cargo security); Surveillance and Command Control in urban policing; Security and Law enforcement in Mass transit system; Lawful interception and investigations; Crime investigations and Forensics and Community policing were organized.

The conference was attended by U.S. delegation consisting of Police Chiefs from major cities and their

technology partners. Important speakers from the US were Stu Frome, Deputy Chief of Staff FLETC; Dan Oates, Chief, Aurora Police Department, Colorado; Michael P. Downing, Deputy Chief, LA Police Department; Erik Aubin, DHS CBP Attaché; Harold Hurtt, Assistant Director, DHS; Daniel C. Clegg, FBI Legal Attaché; Art Acevedo, Chief, Austin Police Dept., Texas.

The Indian delegation included representatives from Indian State Police Forces; Paramilitary Forces, technology partners; other law enforcement agencies and senior officers from Ministry of Home Affairs.

Following is the text of Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde's inaugural speech at India-U.S. Police Chiefs Conference:

“This conference is a key element in the expansion of our bilateral cooperation with the United States, aimed at securing our nations. As strategic partners, the more we can work with each other enhance internal security, the more meaningful our partnership becomes to the ordinary citizen. I am therefore delighted to welcome you to this Conference on Security, Megacity Policing and related issues being organized by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India at New Delhi.

I am happy to note that this Conference brings together Police Chiefs of many important Indian cities as well as some of their American counterparts to discuss and deliberate on important aspects of our common endeavour to secure our cities and our people.

Today countries like India and the United States are at the forefront of the effort to counter the relentless threat of terrorism and international crime. We are also unfortunately the leading targets of such trans-national terror groups and crime syndicates.

All too often, attacks are launched from across sovereign borders, in a manner calculated to cause the greatest disruption of peace. It will, therefore, have to be the endeavor of all

countries to fight this menace in all its forms and manifestations through partnerships based on genuine and result-oriented cooperation.

This was one of the central objectives that inspired our countries to establish the India USA Homeland Security Dialogue. It is as an important element of our growing bilateral security architecture. Indeed, the Homeland Security Dialogue was an outcome of the State Visit of President Obama in November 2010.

Securing our cities is a focus area of our Homeland Security Dialogue, for a simple and obvious reason. As we all know, major terrorist attacks typically target large and densely populated urban areas, intentionally trying to inflict maximum damage. Both our countries have lived through such terrorist carnage, during 9/11 in New York, and during 26/11 in Mumbai.

Cooperation in Megacity Policing is intended to help each other enhance capacity, and to learn from each other, to provide an integrated security umbrella to megacities and large urban centers.

An efficient Megacity Policing system must serve as an effective deterrent against terrorists and their masters, who launch targeted attacks on the nerve centers of a country. Our objective must be to make our cities safe, and therefore our countries safe by reducing our vulnerability to such challenges.

Apart from countering terror attacks, there are other kinds of mass casualty events, and security challenges that are specific to urban centers. All societies work to mitigate such challenges and enhance emergency response capacity. Even though India and the US are at different technological levels in terms of security infrastructure and average urban population size, there are certain commonalities to the challenges that all urban centers face.

So also, there are solutions that some of police forces may have established that are innovative or unique, and may be replicable elsewhere.

There is also a need for better integration of security inputs and information that different law enforcement agencies generate, as well as mechanisms by which regional and federal agencies work with each other. Some of our own challenges in this regard are not uncommon to our American partners, and perhaps the solutions that each of us are working towards can be relevant for each other.

A conference such as this should enable us to enhance the flow of ideas to improve policing and law enforcement action in both our countries. Indeed, it was for these reasons that my counterpart, Secretary Napolitano, and I had agreed that one of the ways in which we could institutionalize cooperation in the field of Megacity Policing was to hold such a conference.

A part from improved policing techniques and operational mecha-

MINISTER SHINDE SAID INDIA-U.S. HOMELAND SECURITY DIALOGUE WAS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THE BILATERAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

nisms to share information, technology is a key input for policing. Increasingly, sophisticated technologies are being adapted, or even specifically developed, to assist Police Forces in early detection of crimes, identification of perpetrators, improved coordination among agencies, and expedited response time.

The United States has consistently led the world in deploying technology in service of its people, and there is much that we can do together as partners to enhance the use of appropriate technologies for our police forces. But beyond the technological aspect of Megacity Policing, there is the human aspect, as well.

Police Forces should also play a

constructive role in providing necessary education and guidance to inculcate a sense of awareness and responsibility in the masses, so that the Police Force can defend us against terrorists and terrorist attacks, in a better manner.

I believe this Conference will exchange experiences and ideas in the areas of Megacity Policing including use of technology in providing effective policing and public safety. Synergy achieved would be a precursor to more vigorous cooperation and collaboration between the law enforcement agencies of the two countries, leading to better synchronization of effort and operations in averting terrorist attacks and tracing such attacks quickly. It will also help us in more regular policing tasks, including securing our public spaces for all our citizens in particular, women and children, and in enhancing the efficacy of law enforcement agencies to act in coordination against international crime.

I expect that this Conference will create new channels of interaction between India and the US, as well as new methodologies for our police forces on both sides to adopt to secure our cities. We hope that this Conference is the precursor to many more efforts to jointly develop our partnership to strengthen the security apparatus of both our countries.

Let me, in conclusion, reaffirm India's commitment to work as partners with the U.S. in bringing and applying State of the Art technologies to crime prevention, crime detection, forensic analysis, better communications technologies and traffic management tools, with the overall objective of making our cities safer, better organized and more orderly.

I urge technology partners from both countries to join hands with each other, and with law enforcement agencies in India and the US, to create an institutional framework to deploy innovative technologies and enhance research to upgrade expertise in various fields of Homeland Security in the larger public interest.”

India, US Army Chiefs review bilateral military cooperation

India's Chief of the Army Staff General Bikram Singh visited important defense establishments of the U.S. military and met a number of high-ranking defense and civilian officials in Washington, D.C.



Chief of the Army Staff General Bikram Singh with U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Ray Odierno in Washington, D.C. Photo: U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Mikki L. Sprenkle

Army Chiefs of India and the U.S. have reviewed the ongoing Army-to-Army cooperation and opportunities to further strengthen bilateral cooperation, including joint training exercises and military exchanges in 2013.

The review was undertaken at a meeting in Washington, D.C. between India's Chief of the Army Staff General Bikram Singh and U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Ray Odierno during General Singh's December 2-5 visit to the U.S.

General Singh also discussed India-U.S. defense relationship with other senior U.S. military leadership during

the visit. The Army Chief visited important defense establishments of the U.S. military and met a number of high-ranking defense and civilian officials in Washington, D.C.

General Singh was inducted into the Carlisle, Pennsylvania based U.S. Army War College (USAWC) International Fellows Hall of Fame, an outstanding honor in the international military community.

General Singh is an alumnus of the USAWC having graduated with the class of 2004, and he was honored for "having made a significant and enduring military/humanitarian contribution to international peace and stability"

while holding the highest military rank in India.

He delivered a keynote speech to the USAWC graduating class of 2013-2014.

During the visit, General Singh was honored with a Full Honors Ceremony by U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Ray Odierno at Fort Myer on December 5, 2013.

The visit assumes special significance in the light of enhanced defense cooperation between the two countries over the last few years and rapidly increasing engagements under the framework for India-U.S. defense relations.

Chief Election Commissioner of India V.S. Sampath interacts with NRIs



1. Counselor Shiv Ratan welcoming the guests at a special interaction of Chief Election Commissioner of India V.S. Sampath with the Non-Resident Indian Community, at the Embassy on December 16.
2. Charge d' Affaires Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu introducing the Chief Election Commissioner to the audience.
3. Address by the Chief Election Commissioner on the role of NRIs in India's electoral process.
4. Interactive session with Chief Election Commissioner Sampath.
5. Guests in attendance.

Commemorating the centenary of Nobel Prize to Rabindranath Tagore

To commemorate the centenary of Nobel Prize to Rabindranath Tagore, the Embassy presented 'A Multi-Lingual Musical Presentation', led by Sudeshna Basu, an ICCR Panel Vocalist and Professor at George Washington University on December 18. Tagore, a philosopher and saint poet of India is the first non-European to receive a Nobel for literature.

Basu presented Tagore's original poems/songs in Bengali and deliv-

ered a talk titled 'Gitanjali beyond Shores'. Besides the rendition of Tagore's songs in Bengali by Basu and in English by Jerome Barry and Fred Dixon, the German, Spanish, French, Chinese and Japanese translations of his songs were also read/recited by Sigrid Vollerthun, Milyedi Gilarte, Veronica Boutte, Prof. Karl K. Zhang and Yoko Kamitani Sen respectively. Jeffrey Bauer and Edivinas Minkstimas accompanied on the piano during this musical presentation.





1. 'Gitanjali beyond Shores' — a talk by Sudeshna Basu.
2. 'Life of my life' — recitation of Tagore poem by Veronica Bouffe in French.
3. 'Know not how thou singest, my master' — recitation of Tagore poem by Sigrid Vollerthun in German.
4. 'I thought my voyage had come to its end' — recitation of Tagore poem by Milyedi Gilarte in Spanish.
5. 'Stray Birds' — recitation of Tagore poem by Prof. Karl K. Zhang in Chinese.
6. 'Save me from danger' — recitation of Tagore poem by Yoko Kamitani Sen in Japanese.
7. 'This is my prayer to Thee, my Lord' — musical presentation by Fred Dixon and Jeffrey Bauer on piano.
8. 'On the day when death will knock at thy door' — musical presentation by Jerome Barry and Edivinas Minkstimas on piano.
9. Guests in attendance.
10. Counselor M. Sridharan with Sudeshna Basu and the other performers.

Embassy celebrates Christmas

The Embassy organized Christmas celebrations on December 20. Charge d' Affaires Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu welcomed the community members and the guests on the occasion and conveyed his Christmas wishes. After Invocation Prayer by Rev. Justin Nathaniel, Pastor of Tamil Christian Church in Maryland, Father Mathew Punchayil, Associate Pastor at the Visitation Church, Darnestown, Maryland, spoke on

'Significance of Christmas and its Relevance to India'. The Christmas Carols were presented by Choir Group from St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C., led by Sonya Sutton, its Choir Director. The function came to an end with the 'Vote of Thanks' proposed by Dr. Mathew T. Thomas, Marthoma Church, followed by a community dinner. The function was conducted by Commodore Alok Bhatnagar, Embassy's Naval Attache.



1. Naval Attache Commodore Alok Bhatnagar welcoming the guests at the Christmas celebrations hosted at the Embassy on December 20.
2. Invocation Prayer by Rev. Justin Nathaniel, Pastor of Tamil Christian Church in Maryland.

3. Charge d' Affaires Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu addressing the gathering.
4. Father Mathew Punchayil, Associate Pastor at the Visitation Church in Maryland, speaking on the significance of Christmas.
5. Presentation of Christmas Carols by Choir

- Group from St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C., led by Sonya Sutton.
6. Vote of Thanks proposed by Dr. Mathew T. Thomas, Marthoma Church.
7. A cross-section of the attendance.

Higher growth returns to Indian IT industry

The resilient \$270-billion plus Indian IT industry returned to the higher growth trajectory in 2013 and is hoping to gain momentum in the ensuing year for a greater share of the global multi-billion dollar outsourcing market.

Putting behind a turbulent 2012, the industry consolidated its presence in the software services sector, with its top four IT bellwethers — TCS, Infosys, Wipro and HCL — posting better results to register a healthy 12-14 percent growth thus far as against 10 percent last fiscal (2012-13).

“We have seen a significant increase in global technology spending this year, creating opportunities for the Indian software services sector to post double digit growth again in export as well as in the domestic markets,” a top industry representative said.

The National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) is expecting the industry to clock export revenues of \$84-87 billion this fiscal (FY 2014) as against \$76 billion last fiscal (FY2013).

In the Indian market, the industry is expected to grow marginally year-on-year at 14 percent to post \$185 billion this fiscal from \$160 billion last fiscal.

“We have decided not to revise our estimates and stick to the 12-14 percent growth forecast for this fiscal though the sector has faced headwinds due to slow recovery in its major export markets — the U.S. and Europe,” Nasscom’s outgoing president Som Mittal told IANS.

The Indian IT industry comprises domestic firms, captive centers of multinationals, global industry classification standards (GICs) and industry sectors providing software and hard-



The highlight of the year was the return of N.R. Narayana Murthy as Executive Chairman of Infosys.

Focal Points

- Software exports to grow 12-14 percent to clock \$84-87 billion.
- Domestic market to also grow 14 percent to \$185 billion.
- N.R. Narayana Murthy returns to Infosys as Chairman.
- Wipro hives off non-IT business as separate enterprise.
- Industry diversifies into offering new services & products.
- Thrust on providing IP-led solutions on multiple platforms.

ware services, business process outsourcing (back office operations), engineering and research and development (ER&D) and products.

The highlight of the year is the return of the industry’s icon and Infosys co-founder N.R. Narayana Murthy as Executive chairman in June to put the global software major back into reckoning after it was found faring behind its peers due to combination of factors.

The year also saw Infosys competi-

tor, Wipro Ltd hiving off its non-IT business in April into a separate enterprise by de-merging its consumer care & lighting, infrastructure engineering and medical diagnostic product & services business from its global software services and products business.

Keeping pace with disruptive technologies and new delivery platforms, the industry has diversified its service offerings to analytics, mobility, cloud, social media and emerging verticals such as healthcare and medical devices.

“India is the only country to offer such a wide range of offerings spanning IT services, BPM (business process management), engineering, R&D, internet and mobility and software products. The internet and mobile platforms are enabling the development of low-cost products not only for enterprises, but also consumers and citizens,” Mittal asserted.

The industry is also investing in technology and talent to explore opportunities like smart computing, anything-as-a service and the small and medium businesses. “The domestic market is also maturing and is one of the fastest in the developing countries, thanks increasing role technology is playing in transforming delivery of diverse services in the government and private sector,” Mittal noted.

Though attrition remained higher than last year, especially among the bellwethers, campus hiring and fresh offers declined during the year, as companies consolidated operations than invest in human capital to make more techies sit on the bench waiting for new projects. The industry added 188,000 jobs last fiscal, taking the total number of direct jobs to three million.

“The industry has once again demonstrated resilience and agility. As technology has become an integral enabler for growth across sectors, we are evolving and innovating to become a strategic partner to our customers,” Nasscom Chairman and TCS Chief Executive N. Chandrasekaran said. — IANS

THE INDUSTRY IS EXPECTED TO GROW YEAR-ON-YEAR AT 14 PERCENT TO POST \$185 BILLION THIS FISCAL FROM \$160 BILLION LAST FISCAL

Transition year for Indian telecom's growth story

With over 900 million telephone connections, India remained the world's second largest telecommunications market in 2013.

The year under review had already equipped the government with a road map, following the release of the National Telecom Policy of 2012.

The government announced some significant initiatives — like the much-awaited policy on mergers and acquisitions and permitted 100 percent foreign investment in the sector — which will drive Indian telecom in the years to come, analysts feel.

The onset of 2013 was accompanied with the introduction of NTP 2012 that brought forth promise of policy stability for the sector, Rajan S Mathews, Director General, Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI), said.

"The implementation of the National Telecom Policy of 2012 is a positive step. But its immediate impact will be limited," said Mahesh Uppal, Director of a telecom consultancy firm, Com First.

Industry stakeholders were upbeat on the new merger and acquisition policy and felt it was an improvement over the previous one. Uppal, for one, felt it will help mid-sized firms, while bigger players will have more flexibility.

"The mergers and acquisition policy will have a major impact," said



Rishi Tejpal, principal research analyst with Gartner.

Analysts did not see much of an impact by allowing 100 percent foreign equity.

"Very few players are keen except Vodafone, which wants to raise its stake beyond 64.38 percent. Investment is a priority for the sector but not foreign equity, per se," said Uppal.

Experts said telecom players were looking for market capitalization and consolidation. "The operators have started to focus on subscriber quality and have done away with the lucrative dealer commissions and promotional minutes. After 2008, for the first time, India has witnessed a surge in

Highlights of 2013

- National Telecom Policy of 2012 introduced.
- Foreign equity of 100 percent allowed in telecom.
- Vodafone evinces interest in buying entire stake of Indian partner.
- Mergers and acquisition policy approved
- Dominant player can hold up to 50 percent telecom market share.
- Telecom tower business given infrastructure status.
- Clearance for unified telecom licences in respect of technology.
- Total telecom connections at 904.56 million end-October.

voice tariff," said Jaideep Ghosh, partner with KPMG.

On the subscriber front, India continued to make progress.

At the end of December 2012, India had 864.72 million mobile phone subscribers and 30.79 million fixed-line connections for a total of 895.51 million wired and wireline.

By this October, this increased to 875.48 million mobile while fixed-line connections declined to 29.08 million.

Thus, the total number of connections stood at 904.56 million end-October, with the overall tele-density in the country increasing from 73.01 at the end of last year to 73.32 at the end of October. — IANS

CII Business Confidence Index rises in third quarter

In a sign of economic revival, the business confidence index (BCI) of industry lobby Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) rose during the October-December quarter of 2013-14.

On an overall basis, the BCI rose to 54.9 during October-December 2013-14, from 45.7 in the previous quarter.

The 85 business outlook survey which is based on responses from over 174 industry

members also revealed that 58 percent of the respondents expect an increase in their sales in the third quarter of 2013-14.

Exports prospects also rose in the BCI with 53 percent of firms expecting to ship-out more products from 49 percent in the previous quarter. "With positive signals emanating from the global economy, which finds a resonance in our improved export performance and is causing our current account deficit

(CAD) to decline, we believe that the slowdown in the domestic economy may have bottomed out in the second quarter and the trend could reverse henceforth," said Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII. "We need to be careful about the upward risk to fiscal deficit amid the scenario of weak economic growth translating into sluggish tax collection and growing chances of disinvestment proceeds falling well short of target." — IANS

Asha Gupta is Tupperware's Asia-Pacific President

Indian-origin Asha Gupta has been promoted as group President of U.S.-based Tupperware Brands Corporation's Asia-Pacific region.

Gupta's promotion is effective from January 1.

Gupta is currently area Vice President of the Tupperware Brands Corporation's India, Philippines and Nutrimerics Australia and New Zealand region.

She will oversee the U.S. direct selling multinational firm's operations in 15 countries, including India,



China, Japan and Australia, said a press release issued by the company.

Gupta is the first woman and first Indian to lead Tupperware in Asia Pacific.

She has been with Tupperware for 15 years in sales development, marketing and operating unit and portfolio leadership across Europe and Asia Pacific.

Tupperware Brands Corporation features products like storage and serving solutions for kitchens. It also deals in beauty and personal care items. — IANS

Air India hopeful of joining Star Alliance by early 2014



National carrier Air India is gearing up to join the inter-line pact Star Alliance by early next year to capture the ever increasing out-bound traffic from India.

The largest inter-line pact of 28 airlines agreed on December 13 to restart Air India's induction process into Star Alliance. "Our priority now is to provide better connectivity and on-time service to our passengers on domestic and international routes," a senior Air India official told IANS.

"Our focus is to provide seamless travel experience to our passengers from our hub airport of New Delhi. Joining Star Alliance will add value to our services."

The airline's eagerness in joining the

alliance can be seen in the light of expanding foreign passenger carrier's foothold in the Indian market.

"We are facing competition especially from the Gulf-based carriers. In this scenario providing direct flights with easy connectivity on other (Star Alliance) member's flights adds value to our products," the official said.

Currently, most of the passengers on Air India's flights to U.S. and Europe do not get connecting flights to other destinations which are farther apart.

This will change as other Star Alliance members will be able to provide single ticket travel to these destinations on their flights.

"Currently, there are no further connections to Air India passengers from

Chicago or for further travel in Europe. This will change immediately after the airline joins the alliance."

Air India will thus become the only airline from India to have joined a global inter-line pact. The other two inter-line pacts being of OneWorld and SkyTeam. Industry insiders say that the exit of Jet Airways which was one of the contenders to enter the alliance ahead of Air India seems to have had a bearing on the Alliance.

Recently, Jet Airways sold a 24-percent stake to Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways. Etihad and Jet plan to code-share on each others' flights between Abu Dhabi, India and other markets in the Middle East, North America and Europe. — IANS

US aviation manufacturers bullish on Indian market

Aviation companies based in the U.S. have expressed confidence about better prospects of Indian civil aviation industry.

“We have had a long and successful partnership with India. We have been in India creating sustainable, aviation ecosystem,” Pratyush Kumar, President, Boeing India, said at the ninth Indo-U.S. Resurgence Summit held in New Delhi on December 2.

Pratyush Kumar, who was speaking at the event organized by the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC), added that his company was in the process of building capacity and capability of the Indian aviation sector and was closely working with education and training institutes as well.

India in recent past has placed orders for maritime patrol aircraft P8I and C-17 heavy-lift military aircraft, apart from scouting for new attack and transport choppers in which the U.S. based companies are participating.

In pure commercial deals, major India-based airlines such as Air India,



Boeing India President Pratyush Kumar.

Jet Airways and SpiceJet operate Boeing built aircraft. State-run Air India has ordered 27 Boeing 787 Dreamliners.

Boeing, on the other hand, is setting up a \$100 million maintenance repair overhaul (MRO) facility for Air India following an order for 737s and 787s Dreamliners which was placed

by Air India in January 2006.

Pratyush Kumar’s views were corroborated by navigational and surveillance components manufacturer Raytheon which has described India as one of the most promising import markets in the world not only from sales point of view but also as a critical global supply hub.

Consultancy firm KPMG’s partner and Head (Aerospace and Defense) Amber Dubey said there are various opportunities for American companies in Indian civil aviation sector ranging from maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facilities, training and infrastructure development.

“There are opportunities for (U.S.) companies in the low-cost development of Indian tier-I and II airports,” Dubey said.

The India-U.S. Aviation Cooperation Program’s officials were also optimistic over developments in the sector and said that they would organize a workshop for both Indian and U.S. companies before the next Indian Civil Aviation Show, slated to be held in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

— IANS

Enormous potential seen for India-US trade growth

Despite some recent concerns on both sides, representatives of U.S. business and industry agreed that there is enormous potential for growth in India-U.S. trade and notably job creation in both countries.

This appeared to be the consensus emerging from a roundtable hosted by Ami Bera, the lone Indian-American member of the U.S. House of Representatives, in Washington on December 5 for members of the US-India Business Council (USIBC) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

More than 40 representatives from several industries including technology, manufacturing, agriculture, retail, hospitality attended the round table, according to a statement issued by Bera’s office.



Ami Bera, U.S. House of Representatives member.

“As the world’s oldest and largest democracies, the U.S. and India are natural allies,” said Bera, who is also a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

“Our countries must work together to continue to grow our economic partnership and trade relationship.” “Relations between India and the United States have never been stronger,” said India’s Charge d’ Affaires Taranjit Singh Sandhu. “Deepening of India-U.S. economic partnership anchors India’s strong relationship with the United States.”

“All agreed that the potential for growth — and notably job creation — in both countries is enormous and that the U.S. and Indian governments remain committed to strengthened two-way trade,” said USIBC Executive Vice President Diane Farrell.

— IANS

Hyderabad-born is Texas Secretary of State

Hyderabad-born attorney Nandita Venkateswaran Berry has been appointed the Secretary of State for Texas, making her the first person of Indian origin to hold the third top executive job in the southern state.

Announcing the appointment of Berry, 45, Governor Rick Perry called the Houston-based attorney one of the most accomplished in the state. She steps into the office on January 7.

As the 109th Texas Secretary of State, Berry would also become the state's chief elections officer; the governor's liaison on border and Mexican affairs and Texas' chief protocol officer for state and international matters.

Her office also serves as the formal repository for official and business records; publishes government rules and regulations, keeps the state seal



Nandita Venkateswaran Berry.

and attests to the governor's signature on official documents. Berry has been on the board of several institu-

tions including the Houston Zoo, the South Asian Chamber of Commerce, the Houston Area Women's Centre, and the Community Family Centre of Houston.

"Nandita Berry personifies what is possible through hard work and dedication in the State of Texas," Perry said.

"Arriving from India at the age of 21 with nothing but \$200 to her name, she worked diligently to earn her law degree and has since become one of the most accomplished attorneys in the state," he said. "Her work ethic, intelligence and wide array of experiences will serve her capably in her new duties as Secretary of State, and I look forward to working with her to keep Texas the best place in the country to live, work and raise a family."

"I am truly humbled to follow in the footsteps of Stephen F. Austin, Texas' first Secretary of State," Berry said. — IANS

Indian origin medical students in US get endowment fund

A group of Indian-American physicians has donated \$30,000 towards creating an endowment fund for Indian origin students of the University of Central Florida College of Medicine in Orlando, Florida.

Uday A. Desai, president of the Central Florida Association of Physicians from the Indian Subcontinent (CAPI), presented a cheque to Deborah German, vice president of Medical Affairs and dean of UCF's Medical School at an event recently. "We at CAPI are a strong medical community, and are already doing good community service in addition to providing the best patient care," Desai said.

"This will be a permanent reminder of CAPI's commitment to future physicians and to assure that they are able to complete their medical education with the least amount of debt possible." The CAPI M.D. Endowed Scholarship will be given to students of Indian origin on the basis of merit and financial need, Desai said. — IANS

Two Indian Americans researchers get US presidential award

President Barack Obama has named 102 researchers, including two Indian-Americans, as recipients of the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers, the highest U.S. honor for young professionals in these fields.

The winners including, Dr. Karunesh Ganguly of San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Centre and Dr. Hardeep Singh of Houston Veterans Affairs Medical Centre, will receive their awards at a Washington, D.C., ceremony this year.

"The impressive achievements of these early-stage scientists and engineers are promising indicators of even greater successes ahead," President Obama said. "We are grateful for their commitment to generating the scientific and technical advancements that will ensure America's global leadership for many years to come."



Dr. Hardeep Singh (left); Karunesh Ganguly

Ganguly's research is aimed towards the development of novel therapies for patients with chronic neurological deficits following stroke or other forms of brain injury.

Much of Hardeep Singh's research has involved detecting, understanding and reducing missed and delayed diagnosis in the outpatient setting, as well as in using health information technology to achieve safe and effective health care. — IANS

India launches affordable device for cervical cancer tests

India launched a cost-effective and affordable device for early detection of cervical cancer in women on December 23.

Cervical cancer is the number one killer among cancers in several parts of rural and semi-urban India, accounting for nine percent of total deaths due to cancer in 2010. It has been estimated that about 1,32,000 cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed every year and 74,000 deaths occur due to it every year.

The screening device called 'AV-Magnivisualizer' has been designed and developed at the Institute of Cytology and Preventive Oncology (ICPO), Noida.

Launching the device, Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad said that with this device it would be easy to screen and detect cervical cancer in its early stages, thus making treatment



Minister for Health and Family Welfare Ghulam Nabi Azad launching the Cervical Cancer Diagnostic Kit — AV Magnivisualizer in New Delhi.

more effective. This cost-effective device would be first rolled out in the district and sub-district community health centers (CMCs) and subsequently in the primary health centers (PHCs), he said.

Indian Council for Medical Research Director General V.M. Katoch said the device would help bring down the rates of morbidity and mortality due to cervical cancer. — IANS

India to set up National Cancer Institute

India will set up a National Cancer Institute, with the federal Cabinet on December 26 approving the proposal for the "landmark step" in the area of research in the disease which has emerged a major public health concern with 1.1 million new cases diagnosed every year.

The 710-bed institute will come up in the Jhajjar (Haryana) campus of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

To be located in Badhsa village in Jhajjar, the NCI is estimated to be at a cost ₹20.35 billion. An official release said the decision to set up the NCI was "a landmark step in the arena of cancer research in the country" and will lessen the deficit of tertiary cancer care in the northern region.

"The setting up of this institute will herald a new chapter in the government initiative against cancer," the release said.

The institute will plan, conduct and coordinate research on cancers which are more specific to India such as those related to tobacco use and those afflicting organs like the uterus, cervix, gall bladder and liver. — IANS

PARAM Supercomputer among the most power efficient systems in world

India's super-computer PARAM Yuva II, developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), has been ranked first in India, ninth in the Asia Pacific Region and 44th in the world among the most power efficient computer systems as per the Green500 List announced at the Supercomputing Conference (SC 2013) in Denver, Colorado, in the U.S., an official release said on January 1.



Supercomputers, in general, consume a lot of electrical power and produce much heat that necessitates elaborate cooling facilities to ensure proper operation. This adds to increase in the total cost of ownership (TCO) of a supercomputer. — IANS

India's Antarctica station at par with world: Geologist Sudipta Sengupta

Thirty years after she first set foot on Antarctica, celebrated geologist Sudipta Sengupta — one of the first Indian women to visit Earth's southernmost continent in 1983 — said improved technology has brought Indian stations on the ice at par with the world.

Describing her experience in the 'continent of science', as "once in a lifetime chance", she highlighted how easy communication from the stations to any part of the world has become in the 21st century.

Sengupta and marine biologist Aditi Pant were part of the Third Indian Expedition to Antarctica that ran from December 3, 1983, to March 25, 1984. Her pioneering work in the Schirmacher Hills of East Antarctica — a line of low coastal hills — boosted further study in the area.

"There is a tremendous difference in the technology in the stations... when we went and now... now it is at par with the stations put up by other countries," Sengupta said.

One of the major achievements of the 81-member team of the third Indian expedition was setting up of the maiden Indian station — the 'Dakshin Gangotri'.

The first expedition was flagged off in 1981 that signalled the commencement of the Indian Antarctic Program.

'Dakshin Gangotri' was replaced in 1988 by the indigenously-designed second permanent station 'Maitri', shortly before the first station was buried in ice and abandoned in 1990-91. In 2012, 'Bharati', became India's third state-of-the-art research base in Antarctica. — IANS

Sprinkling regional flavors in literature

These writings come with a sense of belonging and familiarity, often throwing up daunting challenges for a writer to do justice to the terrain

Regional literature in India has always mirrored social changes, conflicts and cultural shifts of society while Indian writings in English have traced the history and cultural aspects of the metros. These streams are slowly being bridged by a new breed of writers who are venturing beyond the metros and adding piquant flavors to their works.

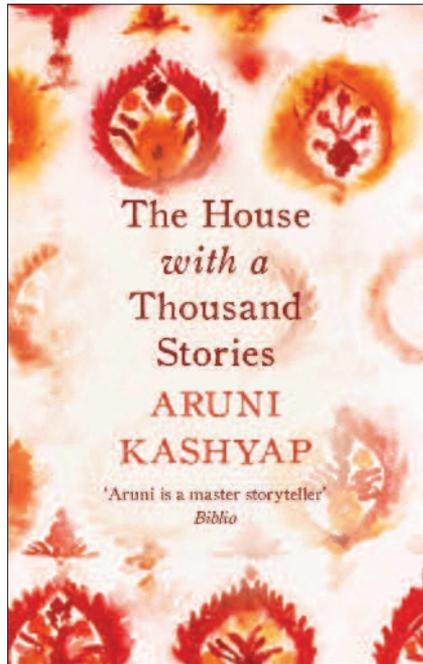
Reaching out to the northeast are TV journalist Kishalay Bhattacharjee's *Che in Paona Bazar* and Aruni Kashyap's debut novel *The House with a Thousand Stories*.

This region has often been shrouded in mystery and stereotyped in umpteen ways, but through these writings, the narrative has navigated through fictional characters in the local settings to give a glimpse of local food, music and culture along the lines of loss, love and conflict.

"My primary focus was to chronicle stories that would connect the dots and present the big picture and also attempt to rid the stereotypical images," admitted Bhattacharjee, whose novel has a series of snapshots from Manipur and is based on real events.

Given the fact this senior journalist grew up in Shillong in Meghalaya and has covered the conflict in the region for 17 years, this automatically lends credibility to the poignant narrative and descriptions.

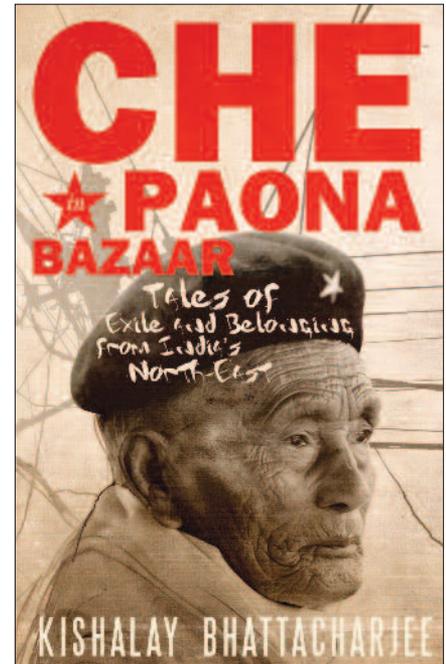
The triumvirate of cities — Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata — have caught the fancy of many authors who have used different storytelling methods to



explore them through their culture, history, society or night life.

Be it William Dalrymple's well researched *City of Djinns*, Suketu Mehta's revelations in *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* or Amit Chaudhuri's lucid tale about Kolkata in *Calcutta: Two Years in the City* — each one has chosen a unique subject to make the text interesting.

The peripheral shift is a win-win situation for writers in English. "It is true that nowadays you have many new voices speaking of towns, cities and regions that are beyond the metros. I think this is happening because the focus is shifting from the center to the periphery and readers want to know of things that seem to be increasingly



falling off the radar," Pan Macmillan India Editorial Director Pranav Kumar Singh said.

"This is adding to the diversity of publishing and engaging readers in many different and new ways," he added.

These writings come with a sense of belonging and familiarity, often throwing up daunting challenges for a writer to do justice to the terrain.

"It has challenges because it can turn out to be entirely anecdotal but my journalistic training helped me to see its objectively," Bhattacharjee said.

Kashyap, whose novel is about Mayong situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra in Assam, felt the regional shift is perhaps because the concept of a pan-Indian novel is slowly diluting.

"One of the reasons why the new crop of writers are setting their novels in smaller cities and writing on regional themes is because the pan-Indian novel in English is probably not relevant any more," Kashyap said.

THE FOCUS IS SHIFTING FROM THE CENTER TO THE PERIPHERY AND READERS WANT TO KNOW OF THINGS THAT SEEM TO BE INCREASINGLY FALLING OFF THE RADAR



Gastronomic pilgrimage is what Lucknow promises, delivers

With over 45 kababs indigenous to it, the capital of Uttar Pradesh is quite up on the list of Indian cities with a highly evolved gastronomic quotient

Hitting the food trail in Lucknow is a pilgrimage! In this land of indulgent nawabs and haute Awadhi cuisine, a lavish *dastarkhwan* — Persian for a well-laid-out spread of

dishes — awaits worshipers of good food. All return blessed!.

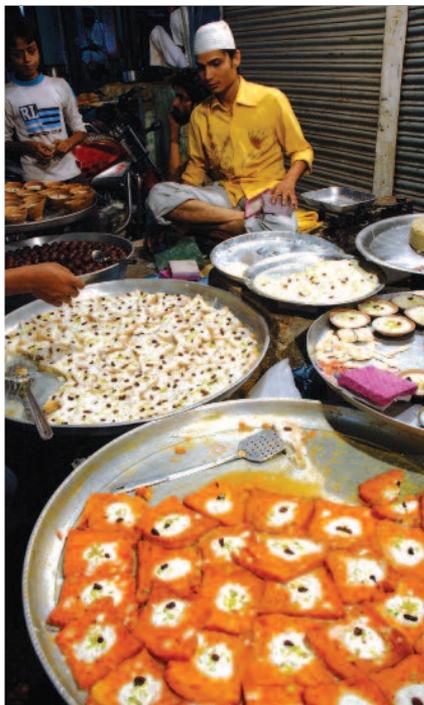
Never a deprived moment here, be it at breakfast or for a late-night bite. Only, one must shed inhibitions. Such as not having something heavy

for breakfast, or getting repulsed by a sea of floating oil in curries.

Think of these as some extra miles of walking needed to burn the calories down.

This apart, some of the famous





The Kingdom of kababs in Lucknow is ruled by *galawati* (Opposite page top). Other kababs famous in Lucknow include the *burras*, *kakor*s, *kalmi*, *patili*, *ghutwa*, and *pasandas*. In this land of haute Awadhi cuisine, some of the famous kababs — even *kormas*, curries and stews — are savored with an array of breads. For those with a sweet tooth, the sinful delights of *shahi tukda* can be a constant companion in Lucknow.

kababs — even *kormas*, curries and stews — of *dum-pukht* or slow-cooked Awadhi cuisine, are eaten with an array of breads, some of which can be both sweet and savory, like the glazed caramel *sheermal*.

Also, don't pair food here with your mind. Leave that part to your palate.

The best-known kabab of Lucknow is, of course, the *galawati*. This is a melt-in-the-mouth patty of finely-minced mutton or beef marinated with a host of spices and condiments, then shallow-fried on a large *tawa* or a cast-iron girdle fired by charcoal. It pairs well with a *roomali roti*.

There is this legendary restaurant Tunday Kababi in the old quarters of Aminabad whose original owners stake claim to having invented this culinary delight. As the legend goes, Chef Haji Murad Ali, a man with just one arm hence the nom de plume Tunda, invented the *galawati* in 1905.

At that time he had a small eatery by the same name in the Chowk area, which was literally a hole-in-the-wall outlet and still exists. The *galawati* was first made for an aging nobleman with no teeth who yearned for some kababs.

Today *galawatis* are available at a host of places. Tunday themselves have many franchises, even outside Lucknow. Most of these eateries serve a mean *galawati* and more.

You have Alamgir, just a stone's throw from Tunday in Aminabad, who have no menu but their *galawati*, *shami*, *kormas*, *nihari-kulcha*, and mutton *biryani* are just awesome.

Other kababs famous in Lucknow, some of which are made only with advance notice, include the *burras* (try them at Shekhawat), *kakor*s, *kalmi*, *patili*, *ghutwa*, and *pasandas*. Food experts say some 45 kababs are indigenous to Lucknow, which also has its own version of rogan josh.

This city has some good fare for vegetarians too. Not that mutton-gluttons can't dig into them. The vegetarian kababs include *dalcha* and *paneer*, as also others made of kidney beans, raw jackfruit, Arbi or Colocasia.

Mornings are best reserved for the traditional *poorie* or *khasta kachori* with *alu-kaddu sabzi*. Top it with *jalebi* and milk that has simmered for hours, or a glass of *lassi*. If you have

already gorged on *nihari-kulcha* the previous day, this is a welcome break.

The vegetarian fare comes alive early evenings when the famous *chaats* of Lucknow are in full bloom. The popular *chaat* joints include Jain, Radhey Lal, Shukla, Chhappan Bhog, Shree Ram and Jagdish.

You do have the *gol gappas* or *paani-poories*, which locals call *batashas*. Here, the casings are filled with a combination of curd and chutney. A different take from what you get in Delhi, Mumbai or Kolkata.

Also try the *alu tikkis* in Lucknow that are stuffed with some secret spices and green peas, as also the crumbling-in-the-mouth *khasta tikkis*. Another specialty is the *tokri chaat* — which looks like a sprouted salad with white, red, green dressing served in a bird's nest.

Kulfis are also a must. Do save some space and time to relish it. Finally, a *paan* does wonders. Even though the city of Banaras is more famous, don't despair. Lucknow's *paans* are equally good and help keep the palate and the momentum going to tuck in more.

'Brand Dhoom is a much larger than starcast'

Actors Abhishek Bachchan and Uday Chopra have been part of the *Dhoom* franchise's journey from the time it took off in 2004. And Abhishek believes that other characters of the film may come and go unlike his and Uday's.

"Pardon the immodesty, but Uday Chopra and I are *Dhoom*. The franchise chronicles the ongoing adventures of Jai and Ali, that's me and Uday. That's the format of the franchise. The other characters may come and go. But we go on forever. Like Batman and Robin. Can there be a *Batman* franchise without Batman?" asked Abhishek.

Having said that, Abhishek looks back with much affection at the journey. "From *Dhoom* to *Dhoom 2* and now to *Dhoom 3*, it has been an amazing journey. To begin with, it was the story of the adventures of these three boys, me, Uday and John Abraham," he said.

"Our producer Aditya Chopra suggested we try to re-define the action genre in our cinema. We were all



Actors (from left) Abhishek Bachchan, Aamir Khan, Katrina Kaif and Uday Chopra with filmmaker Vijay Krishna Acharya (center) during a press conference of film *Dhoom 3* in Mumbai.

young, hopeful and enthusiastic, eager to try out this experiment. How were we to know it would turn out the way it did?" he added.

Now, the junior Bachchan feels the *Dhoom* franchise is watched for being what it is.

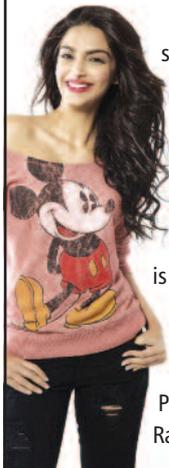
"Yes, there are stars in the film. *Dhoom 2* had Hrithik (Roshan) and

Aishwarya (Rai). And now *Dhoom 3* has Aamir (Khan) and Katrina (Kaif). But I think the brand *Dhoom* is a much larger than starcast."

Abhishek feels the presence of a new director in the franchise brings all-new challenges to the table. The first two installments were directed by Sanjay Gadhvi.

Disney India to co-produce 'Khubsoorat' with Kapoors

Anil Kapoor and his daughter Rhea have joined hands with Walt Disney Studios to co-produce *Khubsoorat*, a remake of the 1980 Rekha starrer *Khubsoorat*.



Sonam Kapoor will be seen playing the happy-go-lucky girl, essayed by Rekha with elan in the earlier Hrishikesh Mukherjee directed family entertainer.

Her character Mili is responsible for turning the lives of a royal family upside down. It also stars Kirron Kher, Ratna Pathak Shah and Amir Raza Hussain.

'Highway' helped me to connect with myself, says Alia Bhatt

From sleeping under the tree to sitting on the road and eating - Alia Bhatt did all for Imtiaz Ali's *Highway* and says that the film helped her connect "with the person within me".

"It helped me to connect with the person within me. My father always said the day an actor finds oneness with the person within is the day he or she becomes a true actor. I think I found that person during 'Highway'. I don't know how much it helped me to grow as an actor, but the film got me to know things about myself that I didn't know," said Alia.

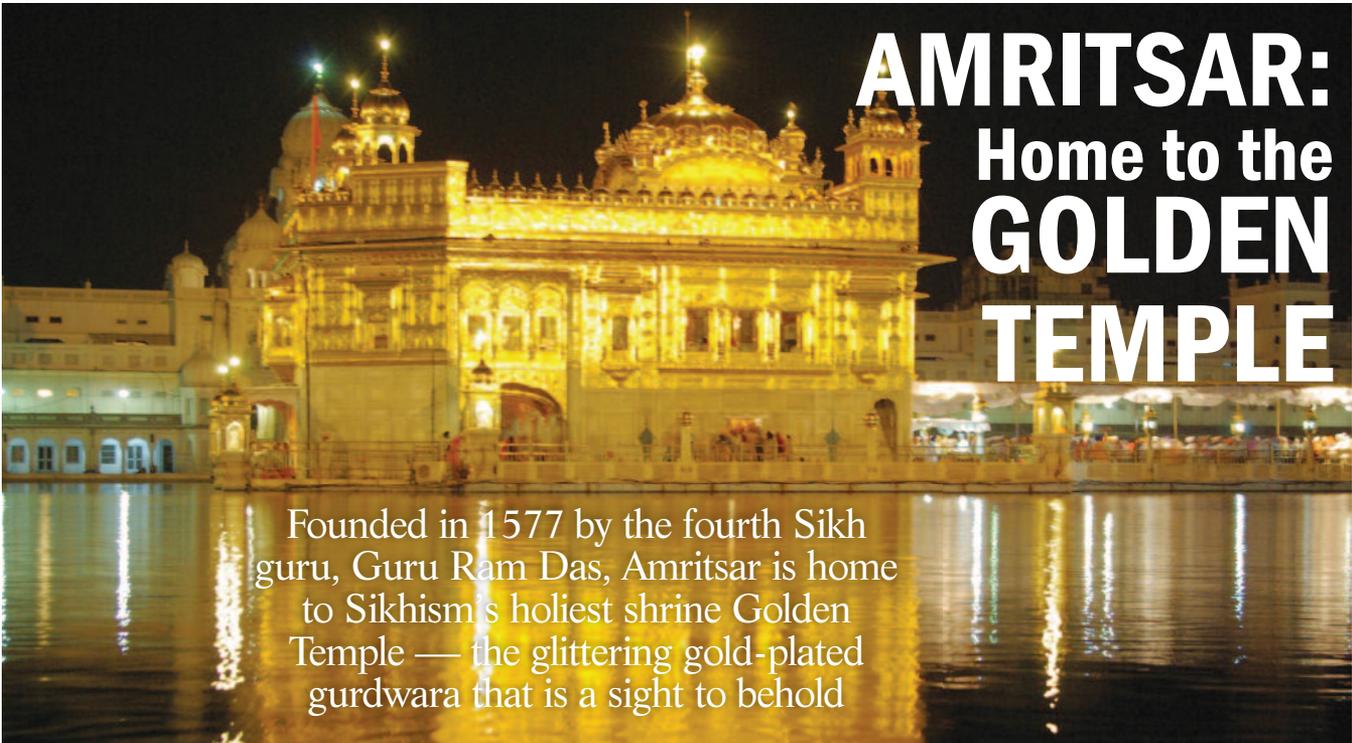
Having played a fashionable airhead in her debut film *Student Of The Year*, Alia has now completed a gruelling, gut-wrenching physically and emotionally exhausting film with Ali.

"It was very difficult," she said and added: "I realize other actors probably come to something like Imtiaz Ali's *Highway* after maybe six to seven films behind them."

"Imtiaz was able to mold my personality in the way he wanted. So a lack of training proved an advantage for the film," she added.



AMRITSAR: Home to the GOLDEN TEMPLE



Founded in 1577 by the fourth Sikh guru, Guru Ram Das, Amritsar is home to Sikhism's holiest shrine Golden Temple — the glittering gold-plated gurdwara that is a sight to behold

When something you have seen and admired only in photographs stands right in front of your eyes, dazzling even more brightly as the sun's rays falls on it, you actually have to pinch yourself to realize that it is no dream.

The Harmandir Sahib, popularly known as the Golden Temple, that was started by the fourth guru of the Sikhs, Guru Ram Das, in the 16th century, can leave anybody awestruck. The foundation of Sri Harmandir Sahib (the temple of God) was laid by Muslim saint Mian Mir of Lahore in 1589. The main structure of the shrine was completed in 1601.

Located in Amritsar, 450 km from the national capital, it is built in the midst of a huge 'sarovar' (pond) which sparkles with the reflection of the gold structure. There are four gateways one can take to reach the place where the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy scripture) is housed.

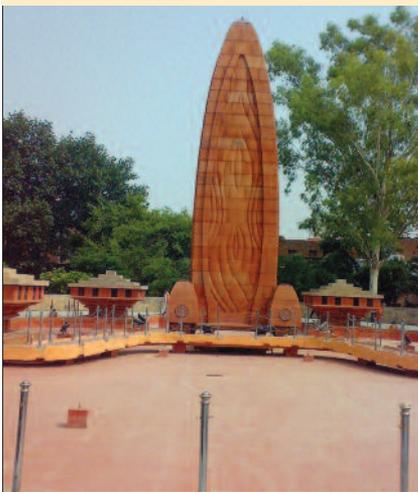
Surrounding the pond are two huge clock towers, atop of one of which is a museum narrating the history of the Sikhs. Adjacent to the clock tower is a building which provides free food to thousands of pilgrims who throng the

How to reach

AIR: Sri Guru Ram Das Jee International Airport is about 11 km and a 15-20 minutes drive from the city center.

RAIL: Amritsar is an important railway station and is well connected to major cities in India through daily trains.

ROAD: Long-distance taxis are available from most places. It takes around 6-7 hours from New Delhi via NH-1. Amritsar is well-connected by bus to most major cities and the northern areas are within a days drive. There are daily direct buses to New Delhi, Jammu, Katra, Chandigarh, Dharamsala, etc.



(Top) The Golden Temple is built in the midst of a huge pond; (Bottom) The Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar.

place every day. The sanctum sanctorum is a two-storeyed marble structure built on a 67-square foot platform with gold leaf adorning the outer walls of the structure and the inside also lined up with pure gold.

Another highlight of Amritsar is the Beating Retreat at the Attari-Wagah border.

The border, located 28 km from Amritsar, is a 45-minute drive away. Every evening, at around 6 pm, as the sun sets, the border gates of both India and Pakistan are closed for the night after a ceremony conducted by border guards of both sides. India's Border Security Force (BSF) troopers and the Pakistan Rangers perform a drill cheered by hundreds on the two sides. The ceremony ends with the synchronized lowering of flags of the two countries.

Another poignant landmark in the city is the Jallianwala Bagh, which commemorates those Indians killed or wounded here in 1919. Some of the bullet marks are still visible. There's an eternal (24-hour) flame of remembrance.

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