

INDIA PERSPECTIVES

Volume 33 ■ Issue 1 ■ January-March 2019



**DIASPORA DIALOGUE:
THE 15TH PBD**

**A SYMPHONY IN STONE
HAMPI'S HERITAGE**

**CELEBRATING FAITH
THE 2019 KUMBH MELA**

**THE OLD GRAIN'S TALE
REVIVING THE MILLET**

POTPOURRI

UPCOMING EVENTS ACROSS INDIA



TULIP FESTIVAL

Witness the beauty of thousands of tulips in full bloom at the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar. The garden is home to over 60 varieties of the flower.

WHEN: April 1- to 15, 2019

WHERE: Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir



BAISAKHI

A harvest festival, Baisakhi marks the ripening of the rabi crop and is celebrated with great pomp and joy in Punjab. People deck up in their festive best and partake in folk dances such as *bhangra* and *gidda*.

WHEN: April 14, 2019

WHERE: Across Punjab

BUDDHA PURNIMA

Buddha Jayanti, also known as Buddha Purnima, celebrates the birthday of Lord Buddha. It also commemorates his enlightenment and death.

WHEN: May 12, 2019

WHERE: Bodh Gaya, Bihar



THRISSUR POORAM

Said to be one of the largest temple festivals in Kerala, it is held at the Thekkinkadu Maidanam and showcases processions of beautifully decorated elephants.

WHEN: May 13, 2019

WHERE: Thirissur, Kerala



EID UL-FITR

The festival marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting and is celebrated with the exchange of gifts and sweets.

WHEN: June 4/5, 2019

WHERE: Across India



YURU KABGYAT

One of the highlights of this festival held at the Lamayuru Monastery is the masked dance performed by monks. It gives visitors a glimpse into the teachings of Lord Buddha.

WHEN: June 29-30, 2019

WHERE: Leh-Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir

FOREWORD

This year, as millions made the pilgrimage to Prayagraj for the 2019 Kumbh fair, they were joined by the delegates attending the 15th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas held in Varanasi. The delegates, after taking a dip in the holy waters of River Ganga at Prayagraj, then travelled onward to Delhi to witness the Republic Day celebrations in the capital by special trains arranged for the event following the successful completion of the PBD.

In a series of firsts, the Indian Minister for External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj travelled to Abu Dhabi to attend the foreign ministers' meet of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation States (OIC), as a guest of honour. This came after her successful visit to Samarkand, Uzbekistan, for the first India-Central Asia Dialogue. The Vice President, Venkaiah Naidu, visited Paraguay and Costa Rica, making him the first high level dignitary from India to visit these two countries. The Prime Minister also concluded a two-day visit to Seoul, South Korea, where he was conferred with the 2018 Seoul Peace Prize, in recognition of his national and international contributions towards global economic growth.

For our photo section, we travel to Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh for the 2019 Kumbh fair, the largest public gathering and collective act of faith anywhere in the world and then head to various destinations across the country to let you experience the festival of Holi in all its local variations. Next, we take you to Hampi in the heart of Karnataka, a destination that is topping global travel charts for its large boulders known for rock climbing, the UNESCO recognised heritage and its picturesque setting.

We also experience the delightful dishes that star the various indigenous millets that are gaining popularity as the new super-grain as chefs from across the country are shifting their focus on to this wonder food for its amazing and untapped nutritional benefits.

We take a look at the various successful schemes that have helped put India on the global map for boosting inclusivity. Initiatives like Digital India and Ayushman Bharat have been the defining factors of the many government projects that have given India's governance model a contemporary and transparent outlook.

Finally, we analyse the new direction of Indian cinema, where several forgotten tales from the country's past are brought to life on the screen. Heroes, events and monumental decisions that were lost in the pages of history are now being carefully researched and broadcast, so that the heroic deeds are immortalised.



Raveesh Kumar



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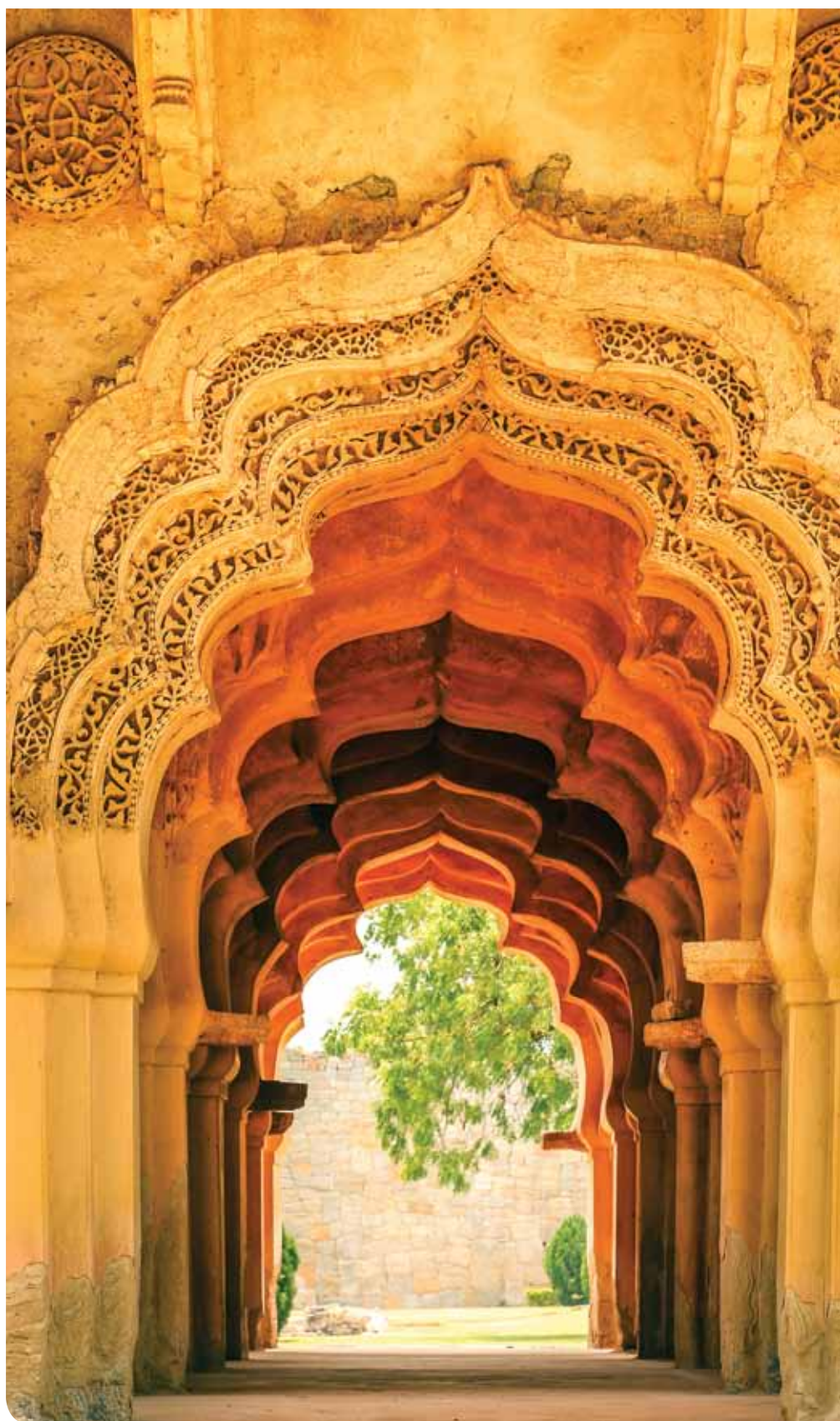
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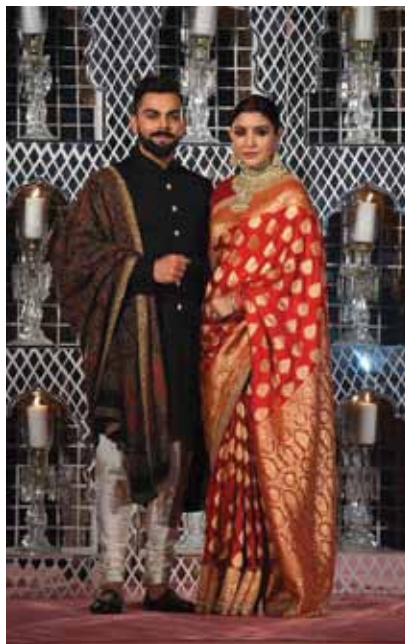
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THE DIASPORA DIALOGUE

The 15th edition of the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas was held successfully in the holy city of Varanasi from January 21-23, 2019 and saw thousands participate in the three-day discourse



(Left to right) Minister of State for Overseas Indian Affairs Retd General VK Singh, Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, Governor of Uttar Pradesh Ram Naik, Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath and Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat at the inauguration of 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention in Varanasi on January 22, 2019

With 31 million people of Indian origin scattered across the world, the Indian diaspora is the second-largest in the world after China. Indians residing in foreign countries are seen as representatives of the nation's talent, culture and skills across the world. The potential of contribution to the Indian growth story by a diaspora this large is endless, therefore, constant engagement through

a meaningful dialogue with the diaspora assumes great significance, an idea which brought about the first Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) on January 9, 2003. A day so chosen to commemorate the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India from his African sojourn.

This year, for the first time since its inception, the Government of India altered the dates for the PBD to January 21-23 to align the convention with the Kumbh Mela and the 70th Republic Day. Upon the conclusion of

With new policies that simplify setting up a business in India, we have been looking to set up a factory in Gujarat or Noida. After the PBD, I think we might just set it up in Varanasi.

Devendra and Punit Gupta
Industrialists from Dubai

”

Platforms with an outreach as large as the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas ensure that we can highlight relevant issues, and address the concerns of non-resident Indians. It is also best suited for a positive exchange of ideas

Mohammed Abdul
Business owner from Dubai

”

the convention on January 23, the delegates travelled via a fleet of special busses specially run from Varanasi to Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, where the Kumbh Mela was being held at the sacred confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mystical Sarasvati rivers. Special arrangements were also made for the delegates to attend the Republic Day celebrations held in New Delhi on January 26.

HIGHLIGHTING GROWTH

With almost 7,300 delegates from about 90 countries in attendance this year, the dialogue was opened on January 22 with the first plenary session of the PBD. The discussion was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who lauded the role of the Indian community abroad in keeping alive the tradition of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family) in his inaugural address. Focussing on the theme “Role of Indian Diaspora in building New India”, he urged the diaspora to



Left to right: PM Modi congratulating a winner at the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards ceremony in Varanasi during PBD; Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius, addressing the audience at the inauguration of the 15th PBD Convention on January 22, 2019



Top and bottom: Actor, dancer and Member of Parliament Hema Malini along with members of her troupe perform at one of the cultural events at the 15th PBD



Kashi (Varanasi) is the true picture of Indian culture. Indians living abroad are not only the ambassadors of the country's culture but also represent its strength, capabilities and characteristics.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

”



The PBD is a powerful stage for many partnerships. Indians living across the world are helping their country by networking and excelling in their fields of work.

Pravind Kumar Jugnauth
Prime Minister of Mauritius

”

The Micro Bubble technology can help reverse the pollution in our rivers by increasing the oxygen content.

At the PBD we can discuss and focus on such important aspects of development.

Sanjay Mehrotra

BHU alumnus settled in Japan

”

India and Mauritius share a deep bond formed on linguistic lines.

With interactive engagement events like the PBD, we can increase this connect in our countries.

Suvrata

Academician from Mauritius

”



Top: The inauguration of the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Varanasi

participate in constructive activities, especially in the fields of research and innovation. Citing the example of the International Solar Alliance, the PM said that with India's current growth trajectory, it is being seen across the world as an emerging leader in the global community.

The Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, graced the event as the chief guest and invoked the values put forth by former Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He mentioned the strong ties shared between the two countries that transcend linguistic and economic boundaries. The 15th edition of the PBD was cited as a festival of cultural reminiscence with the addition of the Kumbh Mela, the largest celebration of faith in the world.

INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

On the first day of the convention, the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was jointly inaugurated

by Sushma Swaraj, Minister for External Affairs; Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Youth Affairs and Sports, and Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath. The event was attended by Kaval Singh Bakshi, Member of Parliament, New Zealand, as the guest of honour and Himanshu Gulati, Member of Parliament, Norway, as special guests for the event. Both dignitaries highlighted the success achieved by people of Indian origin around the world and the rich cultural heritage that is being carried forward by the youth, stressing on the fact that the younger generation would be the future leaders. The EAM, Sushma Swaraj, also addressed the attending delegates saying that while countries like the US, western Europe, Japan and even China are aging rapidly, Indian is getting younger every year. She said that by 2022 these countries will have over one-third of their population over 65 years

Bottom: President of India, Ram Nath Kovind and EAM Sushma Swaraj during the award ceremony of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman on January 23



Additional arrangements

The 15th PBD saw the launch of the first Pravasi Teerath Darshan Yojana. Under the scheme, a group of Indian diaspora aged 45 to 65, will be taken on a government-sponsored tour of religious places in India twice a year.

During the three-day event, special arrangements were made for the attending delegates to visit the numerous tourist attractions around Varanasi, including the Dhamek Stupa and the deer park in Sarnath. Various local crafts like the Benarasi saree and *meenakari* jewellery were showcased during the convention.

After the three-day long PBD, the members of the Indian diaspora were taken to the 2019 Kumbh Mela by a fleet of special busses. The delegates visited the massive tent city, which was especially constructed for the fair and were then taken to the Allahabad Fort in boats chartered by the Gol.

Special trains with AC 2-tier coaches were utilised to escort the delegates to New Delhi on January 25 and the attending members were issued special passes to attend the 70th Republic Day celebrations in the national capital. The President of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa, who was the chief guest for the event, also interacted with members of the Indian diaspora from South Africa.

Discussing development

There were several important discussions that were held during the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas drawing a large gathering of non-resident Indians attending the event. These discussions highlighted the need for development in various fields to strengthen India's existing infrastructure and encourage participation

January 21

Plenary session (Youth PBD): Engaging with the younger members of the Indian diaspora

Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Rajyavardhan Rathore started the inaugural session with a speech on behalf of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. The delegates later interacted with students of the Banaras Hindu University

January 22

Plenary session I: The session began with the inauguration of the 15th PBD, with an address by the Prime Ministers of India and Mauritius.

Plenary session II: Developing India's cyber capacity

Plenary session III: Giving back to India- Opportunities and challenges

A delightful cultural programme was also organised by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations

January 23

Plenary session IV: Indian community organisations working to help Indian nationals in distressed situations

Plenary session V: The diaspora's role in building India's capacity to develop Artificial Intelligence

Plenary session VI: Role of the Indian diaspora in building India's capacity for affordable waste management

Plenary session VII: Indian diaspora's role in building the nation's capacity for affordable solar power

Valedictory session and the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards ceremony with Indian President Ram Nath Kovind

of age, whereas India will have the world's largest working population. This demographic prospective offers India an unprecedented edge. She further added that "you must know and experience that help is just one tweet away. Now with a new model of development, India is the land of startups and innovations."

The event was held alongside the annual UP state PBD that was first organised two years ago to engage with the members of the Indian diaspora who are associated either directly or indirectly with the state of Uttar Pradesh. The state Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath welcomed the delegates and invited them to join discussions that ranged from waste management and green energy to the involvement of the youth in building a new India.

PLEDGE FOR PROGRESS

For the Indian government, PBD presents a unique opportunity to engage with the diaspora

The delegates of the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas at the Prayagraj railway station





EAM Sushma Swaraj, CM of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath and Kanwal Jeet Singh Bakshi, MP, New Zealand, at the Inauguration of the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2019

The 15th PBD also saw the launch of the first Pravasi Teerath Darshan Yojana for NRIs

to take a more proactive interest in the country's development story. Keeping the focus on enhancing opportunities for progress in various fields, several plenary sessions were held during the three days of the event. These discussions touched upon numerous subjects such as the need for developing India's cyber capacity, fuelling the efforts made under various government schemes to develop an Artificial Intelligence to boost e-governance, affordable and feasible waste management and use of green energy.

In addition, there were 30 Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Awards (PBSA) that were conferred to Indian nationals from 20 different countries

for their exceptional contributions in diverse fields including administration, arts and academics, business and entrepreneurship, community and social service, engineering, medical science, etc. The PBSA is the highest honour conferred on overseas Indians by the President of India.

The Pravasi Bhartiya Divas, which is now held once every two years, has become a meeting ground for eminent Indians from across the world to connect with each other, and the country's government, to deliberate upon the way forward in various fields. The event has seen a major metamorphosis in its engagement between the Indian government and the diaspora community, with the relation becoming more energetic and sustained. The large audience that attended this year's PBD only testifies the event's augmented intensity of the government's interaction with the diaspora and its equally enthusiastic response.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives in Seoul for the two-day visit

HONOURS FROM SEOUL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi concludes two-day visit to South Korea, receives the Seoul Peace Prize

With an aim to strengthen India's bilateral ties with the Republic of Korea (ROK) in diverse areas including trade and investment, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a two-day visit to Seoul from February 21 to 22, 2019. PM Modi was also conferred with the 2018 Seoul Peace Prize, in recognition of his national and international contributions at a ceremony

organised by the Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation on February 22, becoming the 14th recipient of the distinguished honour. Reiterating India's promise of full cooperation for lasting peace in the Korean Peninsula, the Prime Minister said that receiving the prize was a great honour for him. PM Modi, who is the first Indian to receive this prestigious award, was also conferred with a plaque and an honorarium cash prize.

India and the Republic of Korea share cordial bilateral relations and the recent high-level visits between the two countries and the honour accorded to PM Modi has only strengthened the ties. Looking back, India played an important role in Korean affairs after the latter's independence in 1945. During the Korean War (1950- 53), both warring sides accepted a resolution sponsored by India. In 2011, India and ROK signed the Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation Agreement and during PM Modi's visit to South Korea in 2015, the bilateral relationship was upgraded to 'special strategic partnership'.

This was the second visit of the Prime Minister to the Republic of Korea since 2015 and the second summit meeting with South Korean President, Moon Jae-in. The visit came as a part of the new momentum in high-level exchanges between the two countries ever since President Moon's visit to India for the Bilateral Summit in July 2018.

PM Modi met members of the Indian

community and held talks with President Moon Jae-in. He also addressed Indian and Korean business leaders during his visit to Seoul.

The Prime Minister also witnessed signing of six MoUs between India and the Republic of Korea to bolster ties in various sectors. The most important MoU was signed for the extension of Korea Plus, an organisation that facilitates investments by Korean companies in India. An MoU on start-up cooperation was signed to promote collaboration among start-ups of both the countries and to establish a Korean Start-up Centre in India to promote ideas, technologies and designs proposed by companies. Trade and economic

South Korea's decision to simplify Group Visa for Indians, will develop tourism between the two nations



Left: PM Modi receives the award from Kwon E-hyock, head of the Seoul Peace Prize Award Foundation; **Right:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Moon Jae-in (left of the bust) unveil the bust of Mahatma Gandhi in Seoul

relations between India and South Korea gathered momentum after the implementation of Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2010.

An MoU between Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) and Prasar Bharti was signed to facilitate the broadcast of DD India television channel in South Korea and KBS World Channel in India. To promote bilateral cooperation in road and transport infrastructure development projects of India and facilitate technical and institutional knowledge exchange in the fields

of road and transport, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between National Highways Authority of India and Korea Expressway Corporation.

Expressing his heartfelt gratitude to President Moon for inviting him to visit Korea, PM Modi said that Korea's model was probably the most exemplary for India's growth. He said that Korea's progress was a source of inspiration for India. He added that there has been a significant progress in the relations between the two nations in a very short period of time.

Speaking about the cordial ties between India and the Republic of Korea, PM Modi said that the integration of India's Act East Policy and Korea's New Southern Policy has given the two nations a great opportunity to further deepen and strengthen the

The visit came as part of the new momentum in high-level exchanges between the nations



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the National Cemetery of Korea in Seoul



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inspects the Guard of Honour during his ceremonial reception in Seoul

Six MoUs between India and South Korea were signed to bolster ties in various sectors

Special Strategic Partnership. PM Modi said that Korea has been a valuable partner in the economic transformation of India and the trade and investment relations between the two nations have been growing. The two countries also agreed on increasing the bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030 during the high-level talks held between Prime Minister Modi and President Moon. Both the leaders also agreed on enhancing cooperation in sectors like infrastructure, port development, marine and food processing, start-ups and, small and

medium enterprises. Acknowledging Korea's efforts to boost defense ties between the two nations, PM Modi said that the defense sector had an important role in the growing strategic partnership between India and Korea, citing the example of the inclusion of the K-9 "Vajra" artillery gun in the Indian Army.

Prime Minister Modi also attended the India-ROK Business symposium during his Korean visit. The Prime Minister's visit to Korea has come at a time when India is celebrating the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi while Korea is celebrating the centenary of its democratic revolution. While conferring the award on PM Modi, the award committee recognised his contribution to the growth of Indian and global economies, crediting the various policies incorporated for reducing social and economic disparity between the rich and the poor.

MATURING OF AN IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between India and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has further been strengthened with the visit of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

BY P SHARMA

Indian foreign policy in the Middle East under the Narendra Modi government has come into its own. The recently-concluded first state visit of Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and also the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is a testament to the strong

bonds India has forged with the powerful Gulf nation. The Crown Prince landed in New Delhi on February 19, 2019, for a two-day visit to strengthen bilateral ties and deliberate upon investments in India's energy sector, retail, and cooperation on international security and terrorism. The dignitary was accompanied by a team of high-level officials as well as a large



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on his arrival at Delhi Airport



President of India Ram Nath Kovind with Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan

business delegation. Breaking protocol, Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally received the Crown Prince at the airport, in a gesture that proved how special the visit was. PM Modi and the Crown Prince had met in November last year on the sidelines of G20 meet in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

A WARM WELCOME

Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, where he met President of India, Ram Nath Kovind. Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj called upon the Crown Prince before delegation level talks were held between the two countries. Building upon century-old economic and socio-cultural ties and extensive people-to-people contact, the two sides held wide ranging talks on multiple issues of mutual interest in areas of energy,

petrochemicals, infrastructure, agriculture, minerals and mining, manufacturing, education and health. The visiting dignitary lauded the role played by Indians in building the west Asian country and also said that the ties between the two nations are very special to him. Speaking after the ceremonial reception at the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan he said, "Relationship between India and the Arabian peninsula, which Saudi Arabia represents about 80 per cent, goes back thousands of years. Even before history was

Saudi Arabia is now India's fourth largest trading partner and fulfils 20 per cent of India's crude oil requirements

written. The relationship between India and Arabian peninsula is in our DNA.”

NEW AVENUES

During the talks, the two sides welcomed the successful completion of the NITI Aayog and Saudi Centre for International Strategic Partnership (SCISP) workshop, organised in Riyadh recently. The workshop identified more than 40 opportunities for collaboration and investments across an assortment of abeyant avenues. India and Saudi Arabia also signed various agreements such as investing in the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund of India, cooperation in the field of tourism and housing, a framework cooperation programme between Invest India and Saudi Arabia General Investment Authority, cooperation on broadcasting for exchange of audio-visual programmes and an agreement for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to join the International Solar Alliance launched by PM Modi. Furthermore, the potential for cooperation in the renewable energy sector including R&D, space, science and technology, including remote sensing, satellite

The visiting dignitary also agreed to PM Modi’s request of increasing India’s Haj quota to 2,00,000 from the existing 1,75,000

communication, and satellite-based navigation were also discussed. An MoU for cooperation in the field of housing was welcomed, which encourages Indian companies to participate in the housing projects in Saudi Arabia.

OIL PLUS

Considering the bilateral trade between the two countries nearing USD 30 billion during the 2017-18 financial year, Saudi Arabia is currently India’s fourth-largest trading partner. In addition to Saudi Arabia fulfilling approximately 20 per cent of India’s crude oil requirements, the country’s national petroleum and natural gas company, Saudi ARAMCO, in association with Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, has entered a tripartite joint venture worth USD 44 billion with India’s Ratnagiri Refinery and Petrochemical Project



Left: Exchange of agreements between India and Saudi Arabia took place in New Delhi; **Above:** External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj meets Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, ahead of the official talks



Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia inspects Guard of Honour during his ceremonial reception at Rashtrapati Bhavan

The visiting dignitary said that the ties between the two nations are very special to him

Ltd. It is the largest greenfield refinery project that will be implemented in one phase and is expected to process 1.2 million barrels of crude oil per day in addition to producing a wide range of refined petroleum and petrochemical products. Acknowledging this positive upswing in bilateral trade and investment, both nations concurred that there was untapped potential in non-oil merchandise.

IN GOODWILL

During his visit, to honour the cordial ties between the two countries, Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud agreed to

PM Modi's request of releasing 850 Indian prisoners lodged in Saudi Arabia's jails and increasing India's Haj quota to 2,00,000 from the existing 1,75,000. Reciprocally, the Indian government agreed to an increase in the seats of Saudi Arabian Airlines from 80,000 seats per month to 112,000 seats per month. Both leaders agreed to augmenting the current 'Strategic Partnership' between the nations with a dedicated high-level monitoring mechanism through a Strategic Partnership Council led by PM Modi and the Crown Prince.

India and Saudi Arabia have historically enjoyed close and friendly relations anchored in mutually beneficial partnership and extensive people to people contacts. The Crown Prince's first official visit to India marks not only a new chapter in India-Saudi relationship but also indicates a paradigm shift in India's foreign policy in West Asia and its diplomatic success in the region.



Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu arrives at Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay, on the first leg of his visit to Paraguay and Costa Rica on March 5, 2019

NEW FRIENDSHIPS ON THE BLOCK

Indian Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu visited Paraguay and Costa Rica to strengthen ties with the Latin American countries

Against the backdrop of India's renewed interest in the Latin American region, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu made a state visit to Paraguay and Costa Rica from March 5 to 9, 2019. Aimed at stepping up political engagement and increasing trade and investment with the region, Vice President Naidu successfully concluded his seven day-long tour to the two nations, becoming the

first high level dignitary from India to visit the two countries.

The Vice President was accompanied by a high-level delegation, including the Minister of State for Tourism Alphons Kannanthanam, Members of Parliament and senior officials of the Indian government.

Costa Rica's University of Peace, founded by the United Nations, conferred an Honorary Doctorate to Vice President Naidu for his

contribution to the “rule of law, democracy and sustainable development in India”. In his acceptance speech, the Vice President said that he was overwhelmed to receive the honour in an year that will see the world commemorating Mahatma Gandhi’s 150th birth anniversary. He further added that the honour is not only for him but also for India, a country that has been championing for peace since time immemorial.

Vice President Naidu held delegation level talks with the leadership of Paraguay and Costa Rica, addressed business communities and interacted with the Indian diaspora in both the nations. He also invited investors and entrepreneurs from the two countries to invest in and do business with India. Vice President Naidu also sought support from both nations for UN Security Council reforms

and called for united global action against terrorism. During the historical visit, the Vice President also spoke in favour of the expansion of the International Solar Alliance.

PARAGUAY

Vice President Naidu began his official tour in Paraguay on March 6 and met the President of the Republic of Paraguay, Mario Abdo Benitez, Vice President Hugo Velazquez and Silvio Ovelar, the President of

Vice President Naidu said that the bilateral relations between India and Paraguay have been reflecting an upward trend



Vice President Naidu interacts with members of the Indian diaspora in Asuncion

the National Congress. Vice President Naidu said that the bilateral relations between India and Paraguay have been reflecting an upward trend and that the two nations share common values, interests, aspirations and both have very promising futures. He also noted that Paraguay was an important partner for India in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

The Vice President was given a warm welcome at the Indian Community reception in Paraguay. Addressing the Indian diaspora in the country, he said that each member of the Indian diaspora was a cultural ambassador of India. He also complemented the achievements of Indians in Paraguay. Vice President Naidu expressed his belief that the Indian diaspora will strengthen the ties between India and Paraguay.

VP Naidu was conferred with an Honorary Doctorate by the Costa Rica university for his contribution to the rule of law, democracy and sustainable development in India

Addressing the business community, Vice President Naidu said that there was immense scope for the Indian companies to invest in the automobile, pharmaceuticals and engineering goods sectors in Paraguay. He also invited the business community of the two nations to partner with each other for trade, technology and investment collaborations.

A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between the Diplomatic and

The Indian Vice President unveils commemorative stamps issued by Government of Paraguay to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in Asuncion on March 6, 2019



Consular Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Paraguay and the Foreign Service Institute, Ministry of External Affairs of India. Vice President Naidu also invited the Paraguayan President Abdo Benitez to visit India at a mutually convenient time to strengthen the linkages between the nations.

COSTA RICA

Vice President Naidu visited Costa Rica from March 7 to 9, and held delegation level talks with the President of Costa Rica, Carlos Alvarado Quesada. This was the first ever high-level visit from India to the Central American nation. During the visit, India and Costa Rica also signed two crucial documents: a Memorandum of Understanding between India and Costa Rica on the waiving of visa requirement for diplomatic and official passport holders and the signing of a letter



Above: The Indian VP meets Carolina Hidalgo Herrera, president of the Congress of Costa Rica in San Jose, Costa Rica

Left: Vice President Naidu pays floral tributes at the bust of Mahatma Gandhi in the University of Peace, San Jose, Costa Rica, on March 8, 2019

PARTNERSHIP



Left: The Indian Vice President being conferred upon with the Degree of Doctor Honoris Causa at the University of Peace, San Jose, Costa Rica on March 8

Below: Vice President Naidu delivers his address at the University for Peace, San Jose



The Vice President delivers his address at the community reception in San Jose on March 9



Vice President Naidu said Costa Rica is an attractive tourist destination and could be brought on the tourist circuit of Indians

of intent to collaborate in the field of biotechnology.

During high-level talks, Vice President Naidu said that the two nations enjoy close and cordial ties, based on shared commitment in the pursuit of democracy, pluralism, multiculturalism, freedom of press, equitable human rights and other such important values and principles. He also addressed the India-Costa Rica Joint Business Forum and said that India and Costa Rica can collaborate in multiple areas including digital sciences,

biotechnology and climate change. The two nations also decided to explore trade opportunities in several sectors, including agriculture, agriculture machinery and space. Costa Rica will be sending two scientists to participate in the Unispace Nano-satellite Assembly and Training, conducted by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). Under this programme, ISRO is training scientists from various countries to build nano-satellites as part of India's space diplomacy.

The Vice President's visit to Paraguay and Costa Rica has advanced India's outreach to the two nations and will strengthen bilateral ties in trade and investment, renewable energy, education, healthcare, space and people-to-people linkages. The visit is also expected to ease travel between the countries and improve people to people linkages.

DEEPENING BONDS

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa attended India's 70th Republic Day as chief guest, reaffirming the strategic and historic relationship the two nations share

BY PATANJALI PUNDIT



President of India Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Cyril Ramaphosa, the President of South Africa, at the 70th Republic Day celebrations at Rajpath in New Delhi on January 26, 2019

It was a historic moment when on January 26, 2019, the President of the Republic of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa attended India's 70th Republic Day event held in New Delhi as the chief guest. It was way back in 1995 when the then President of South Africa, Nobel Peace prize laureate Nelson Mandela, became the first President of South Africa to be accorded the honour. The South African President's visit to India comes after the nation was chosen as a partner country at the Vibrant Gujarat summit held earlier this year, owing to the USD 10 billion bilateral trade between the two countries. President Ramaphosa's efforts for international investment have generated a keen interest amongst many Indian companies.

INDIA AND SOUTH AFRICA

As India celebrates 150 years of Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary in 2019, the state

visit of President Cyril Ramaphosa on Republic Day assumed special significance. It was in South Africa that Gandhiji first conceptualised and experimented his ideas of truth, non-violence and civil disobedience that took the form of Satyagraha. Gandhiji's Satyagraha not only played a climacteric role in the Indian independence movement and inspired the anti-apartheid movement led by Nelson Mandela but also was critical as "truth-force" to the African American Civil Rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr in the United States of America.

President Ramaphosa delivered the First Gandhi-Mandela Freedom Lecture organised by the Indian Council of World Affairs



PM Modi meets President Ramaphosa at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on January 25

Nelson Mandela had developed strong relations with India politically while maintaining a strong apolitical connect with India. Mandela, popularly known as Madiba, firmly believed that “India deserved a place of glory among the closest allies whose contribution to the abolishment of the apartheid and the making of South Africa was undeniable as well as immeasurable.” A staunch Gandhian himself, he owed his tenacious relationship with India to Gandhiji.

A CEREMONIAL WELCOME

President Ramaphosa arrived in Delhi on January 25 following a successful showing at the World Economic Forum in Davos. On his first visit to India, he was accompanied by First Lady Dr Tshepo Motsepe, and a high level delegation, including nine ministers, senior officials of his government and a 50-member strong contingent representing the South African business community. Following a

PM Modi and President Ramaphosa aimed at achieving better business ties between the two countries

ceremonial reception accorded to him at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the President of South Africa and the First Lady honoured the memory of Gandhiji by laying a wreath at Raj Ghat, the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi.

STRATEGIC COOPERATION

During the visit, President Ramaphosa and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks aimed at deepening the bilateral cooperation “in the spirit of the strategic partnership, strong friendship and historical links” between the two nations. The two countries sought to augment and intensify



President Ramaphosa along with his wife First Lady Tshepo Motsepe pay homage at the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi at Raj Ghat in New Delhi

Right: President Ramaphosa delivers the first IBSA Gandhi-Mandela Memorial Freedom Lecture in New Delhi

Bottom: PM Modi and President Ramaphosa witness an exchange of agreement between External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj (right) and her South African counterpart Lindiwe Sisulu during a joint statement at Hyderabad House in New Delhi



cooperation in military to military contact, maritime security, skill development, mining and defence equipment, agriculture, and information technology. The most significant outcome of the talks was a Three-Year Strategic Programme of Cooperation (2019-2021) signed by the two sides, that seeks to enhance the strategic partnership between the two countries.

TRACK 1.5

With the objective of further developing business ties between the two countries and hoping to achieve a trade target of USD 20 billion by 2021, the two leaders jointly addressed the India-South Africa Business Forum. Both the leaders recalled the strategic partnership established between India and South Africa through the Red Fort Declaration of March 1997 and the Tshwane Declaration of October 2006. They expressed satisfaction at the “deepening and widening of this comprehensive bilateral partnership” but at



the same time emphasised the need to further strengthen cooperation in political, economic, defense, scientific, consular and socio-cultural realms. The two countries will work together under Track 1.5 diplomacy with focus on areas to promote practical cooperation with Africa identified in the Delhi Declaration 2015 of the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit.



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

During the visit Prime Minister Modi and President Ramaphosa committed themselves to promoting reformed multilateralism through cooperation and coordination at all relevant multilateral fora such as G20, BRICS, IBSA, BASIC, NAM, WTO and the Commonwealth, as well as the strengthening of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Prime Minister Modi welcomed the successful holding of the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg in July 2018, agreed to further enhance cooperation and coordination within BRICS with a view 'to reform and enhance global political and economic governance.' He further congratulated South Africa on becoming a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2019-20 and assured South Africa of India's support in the performance of its responsibilities in this role.

DEEPENING DEFENCE COOPERATION

The leaders expressed satisfaction at

Top: Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa attends the 'At Home' Reception hosted by the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhavan with Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Right: An Indian armed forces contingent marches along Rajpath during the Republic Day parade



the steady pace of cooperation in the defence sector through various avenues of engagements including production, joint collaboration, manufacturing, research and development, training and joint exercises. In order to ensure unhindered passage for trade and continued prosperity of the entire Indian Ocean Region (IOR) the two leaders recognised the importance of increased



bilateral naval cooperation and closer synergy within the context of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

TOWARDS A PROSPEROUS FUTURE

India and South Africa share a unique colonial history coloured with strokes of racial discrimination and a long struggle for sovereignty. The uniquely reticulated histories of India and South Africa, as Prime Minister Modi

pointed out during the India-South Africa Business forum, “are much deeper than we generally realise”. And we couldn’t but agree more with what PM Modi said that a strong relationship between the two nations will result in a shared and prosperous future and this will realise the dreams of Madiba and Mahatma for a better future for not just the people of these two countries but of the entire world.



MAKING HISTORY

India attended the session of Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Abu Dhabi, as a guest of honour, a first since the body's formation 50 years ago

It was a historic occasion when India's Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj, addressed the inaugural plenary of the 46th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on March 1, 2019, in Abu Dhabi. Addressing the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC, the External Affairs Minister

(EAM), in her very memorable speech, said, "I come from land of Mahatma Gandhi, where every prayer ends with the call for *shanti* or peace for all." India had been invited to the session as a "guest of honour" by United Arab Emirates (UAE) this year's host country. India's presence at the meet, held from March 1 to 2, was momentous as it not only recognised



Facing Page: EAM Sushma Swaraj arrives in Abu Dhabi for 46th Foreign Ministers Meeting of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. **Above:** EAM Sushma Swaraj delivers her speech at OIC

India's contribution to the Islamic world but also the 185 million Muslims in the country, one of the largest in any country in the world.

For the first time since OIC was founded in 1969, India attended such a gathering of the organisation, which is a group of 57 nations, of which 40 are Islamic countries. The organisation has emerged as the collective voice of the Islamic world and is aimed at promoting international peace and harmony. In her address at the plenary, the EAM also said that Muslims living in India are a microcosm

of the diversity of the country and that they have diverse culinary tastes, myriad choices of traditional attire, and maintain strong cultural and linguistic heritage of the regions that have been their homes for generations. She said that 2019 has come as a special year as the OIC is celebrating its Golden jubilee, UAE is celebrating the Year of Tolerance and India will be celebrating the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Talking about the organisation, the EAM said that the OIC has played a key role in

For the first time since OIC was founded in 1969, India attended such a gathering of the organisation

shaping the world as its members constitute more than one fourth of the members of the United Nations. Appreciating the efforts made by the organisation, she further added that the organisation has succeeded in bringing together nations on the foundation of a common faith and its members share a mutual desire of having a better future for their people. She said that the countries who are a part of the OIC also reflect a magnificent diversity of language and literature, customs and culture, history and heritage. EAM Swaraj added that in

the past few years, few relationships have seen as much engagement as India's relationship with UAE and with the entire Gulf and West Asia Region.

India had been invited to the session by UAE, reinstating the strong bilateral relationship the two countries share. The Foreign Minister of United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan had extended the invitation to EAM Swaraj. Talking about India's relationship with the UAE, Swaraj said that the two nations have stood together in solidarity in their quest for justice, dignity and equality for all people, regardless of race and religion. She said that both the nations have worked together to turn global institutions into representative platforms defined not by the interest of a few, but the voice of all sections of humanity. After



Facing Page: Addressing the Council of Foreign Ministers, EAM Swaraj mentioned India's relationship with the UAE, adding that the nations have stood together in solidarity in their quest for justice, dignity and equality of all people



Left: EAM Sushma Swaraj with Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Dr AK Abdul Momen on the sidelines of OIC Foreign Ministers Meeting in Abu Dhabi; **Above:** The EAM with her counterpart from the Maldives, Abdulla Shahid during her visit

The invitation was extended in recognition of India's global political stature, deep rooted legacy and its important Islamic component.

her address, EAM Swaraj also held bilateral talks with her counterparts from Bangladesh, Dr AK Abdul Momen and the Maldives, Abdulla Shahid, and exchanged views on the regional and bilateral issues.

Swaraj also expressed India's special gratitude to Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh and other friendly nations for their strong support in hearing India's voice at the OIC forum. Last year, Bangladesh proposed restructuring of the charter of the OIC to pave way for the inclusion of non-Muslim countries like India as an "observer state" of the 50-year-old group.

In her address, EAM Swaraj also acknowledged the presence of other nations at the session and said that India has developed deep bonds of friendship and

close partnerships with them. Terming the Indian economy as the fastest growing in the world, she said that it was the world's third-largest economy on Purchasing Power Parity and India would be happy to share its market, resources, opportunities and skills with its partner countries. She asserted that India will do whatever it can to ensure that the path to development remains open to all and the global trade regime is open, stable and fair.

EAM Swaraj also spoke about the menace of terrorism and said that the fight against it was not a confrontation against any religion. She said that every religion in the world stands for peace, compassion and brotherhood. The minister said that India will continue working with OIC to spread the true meaning and mission of all religions and towards countering the language of animosity with the message of harmony. The minister added that OIC also needs to inspire youth to follow the path of service than that of ruin.

India's presence at the meeting was historic and was a stepping stone towards larger engagement with the OIC and the Muslim world.

THE CENTRAL ASIAN CONNECT

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's participation in the First India-Central Asia Dialogue in Uzbekistan in January 2019, strengthened the ties between the two traditionally friendly nations

BY PATANJALI PUNDIT

In 2018, when External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj was on an official visit to Uzbekistan in August 2018, she was pleasantly surprised by an elderly Uzbek woman on the streets of the country's capital Tashkent, who sang the song "*Ichak dana bichak dana*" from the classic Bollywood movie *Shree 420*! While the video of the woman singing and the minister enjoying the song may have gone viral on social media, Hindi movies and television soaps are very popular in this Central Asian nation. This cultural connect between the people of India and Uzbekistan only reiterates the strong bonds shared by India and the Central Asian region. Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's global tour in 2015, which included stops across Central Asia, the relationship has gone from strength to strength. EAM Swaraj's two-day visit to Uzbekistan, between January 12 and 13, 2019, to attend the first India-Central Asia Dialogue, was a step in the same direction.

THE DIALOGUE

The two-day Dialogue focussed on trade and geo-political considerations. It was attended by the foreign ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, the first deputy foreign minister of Kazakhstan and the special invitee, foreign minister of Afghanistan, Salahuddin Rabbani.

In an attempt to boost connectivity between India and Central Asia, for enhancing trade and commerce, EAM Swaraj proposed a dialogue on air corridors. Citing the successful example of the air corridor between India and Afghanistan, she proposed the organisation of a dialogue among the civil aviation authorities, air freighters and aviation companies of India and

India has welcomed the participation of the nations in the India-Iran jointly run Chabahar Port



EAM Sushma Swaraj (centre) with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan (L to R) participate in the Ministerial Meeting of the India-Central Asia-Afghanistan Dialogue

Central Asia so that goods, including perishable items, can be transported efficiently and swiftly.

To overcome the various geographical and infrastructural constraints in promoting connectivity between India and the central Asian region, India has welcomed the participation of the nations in the India-Iran jointly run Chabahar Port. She said, “While geographically, Afghanistan and Central Asia are landlocked, there are several ways in which India, Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries can join hands to work on promoting connectivity in the region so that trade and commerce may flow between us and our people to people exchanges may prosper.” The EAM further added that Chabahar provides a shining example of what strong partnership can achieve to overcome any obstacles.

Eager to promote connectivity routes, India has recently joined the Ashgabat Agreement, which seeks to establish an International Transport and Transit Corridor between Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. EAM Swaraj further welcomed Uzbekistan’s interest in joining the International North South Transport Corridor, a 7,200-km-long multi-modal (ship, rail and road) transportation system for connecting the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran and then to Russia and North Europe.

The EAM also proposed the setting up of the India-Central Asia Business Council

Key Points from EAM's speech

The emergence of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as independent countries provide huge opportunities to build modern partnerships on these strong foundations.

India has always been and will always be a reliable friend and partner of Central Asia. The time has come to substantially raise our level of the engagement.

Government of India would be happy to conduct special training courses for Central Asian countries in fields like prevention of smuggling of narcotic substances, WTO, remote sensing, high-level IT courses, filmmaking, oil and gas sector and policy planning and public administration.

Indian movies have enjoyed wide popularity in Central Asia with its popular songs and themes based on family and society. This love for Indian movies goes back to older generations. We should all work towards putting in place commercial mechanisms for film distribution in Central Asia and India so that our movies become available to each other's peoples.

THE AFGHANISTAN CONNECT

For its strategic location as an important land link between India and Central Asia, the delegates at the dialogue welcomed Afghanistan's participation and expressed support for an inclusive peace process in Afghanistan that is "Afghan-owned, Afghan-led and Afghan-controlled". With the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan on the precipice, a stable Afghanistan is essential to maintaining peace and prosperity in the region.

EAM Swaraj highlighted the Indian support to Afghanistan of over US\$ 3 billion, focused on reconstruction, infrastructure development, capacity building, human resource development and connectivity under the 'New Development Partnership' launched in September 2017. She further stated that "development partnership has emerged as an important component of India's engagement with other countries. We are happy to look at ways of extending this partnership to Central

Bottom: EAM Sushma Swaraj addresses the first session of India-Central Asia Dialogue





Left: The Indian External Affairs minister meets Rasit Meredow, Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, on the sidelines of the India-Central Asia Dialogue in Uzbekistan;
Right: EAM Swaraj departs for Delhi after her successful participation in 1st India-Central Asia Dialogue in Samarkand



To boost connectivity between India and Central Asia, EAM Swaraj proposed a dialogue on air corridors

Asia as well.” The Indian EAM proposed the setting up of the “India-Central Asia Development Group” at G2G level to take forward this development partnership. In order to engage business to business contacts in a structured manner to facilitate greater understanding of our respective regulations EAM Swaraj also proposed the setting up of the India-Central Asia Business Council formed by a leading Chamber of Commerce and Industry of each of country comprising of business communities as members of this body.

EAM Swaraj also held talks with her Uzbekistan counterpart Abdulaziz Kamilov on the sidelines of the India-Central Asia Dialogue and discussed stepping up cooperation in multiple areas including trade, economy, health, education, defence, space, IT and people-to-people ties. The EAM also met Turkmenistan’s Foreign Minister Rasit Meredow and discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation across sectors.

In a joint statement issued at the conclusion of the event all participants expressed satisfaction at the success of the first ever India-Central Asia dialogue and expressed deep gratitude to the Republic of Uzbekistan for organising it. The ministers agreed to continue holding the India – Central Asia Dialogue with participation of Afghanistan at the level of foreign ministers on a regular basis and agreed to meet in the same format in New Delhi in 2020.



HEALTH FOR ALL

The world's largest government-funded healthcare scheme,
Ayushman Bharat is winning hearts

Ayushman Bharat, a government-sponsored healthcare scheme in India, that is said to be the world's largest, has brought several unknown faces to the limelight. People from many rural areas and smaller towns across the country can be seen singing praises of the scheme that has provided them with healthcare benefits at very subsidised rates. Various videos in regional languages, highlighting the benefits of the scheme have also taken social media by storm. But,

Ayushman Bharat is turning out to be the panacea for the ailing across the country.

Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest government-funded healthcare scheme, was announced by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi from the ramparts of Red Fort during his speech on the occasion of India's 72nd Independence day on August 15, 2018. On September 23, 2018, PM Modi launched Ayushman Bharat in Jharkhand's capital Ranchi. Renamed as Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), the programme became operational from September

25 and through it, the government aims to provide healthcare facilities to over 10 crore families covering urban and rural poor. Also known as National Health Protection Mission or “ModiCare” as it’s popularly called, this is a centrally-sponsored scheme under the Ayushman Bharat Mission of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) in India.

INCLUSIVE CARE

Ayushman Bharat has received much attention and praise the world over for its scope and inclusiveness. The scheme has been conceived as cashless and paperless. With no cap on family size and age, it will be catered to by public hospitals and empanelled private hospitals covering all pre and post-hospitalisation expenses. A National Health Agency has been set up to oversee its implementation. Ayushman Bharat has two major components, the National Health

Protection Mission (NHPM) and the Wellness Centre programme.

The PMJAY forms the core of the NHPM and seeks to reduce the financial burden on vulnerable groups arising out of catastrophic hospitalisations. It provides Swasthya Suraksha (Health protection through financial inclusion) to 10.74 crore poor, deprived rural families and identified occupational categories of urban workers’ families as per the latest Socio-Economic Caste Census data. It will offer a benefit cover of INR 500,000 per family per year (on a family floater basis) catering to 50 crore beneficiaries.

Through Ayushman Bharat, the government aims to provide healthcare facilities to over 10 crore urban and rural poor families



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi gives a health card to a beneficiary of Ayushman Bharat-National Health Protection Mission at the launch of the programme in Ranchi on September 23, 2018

ALL-IN-ONE

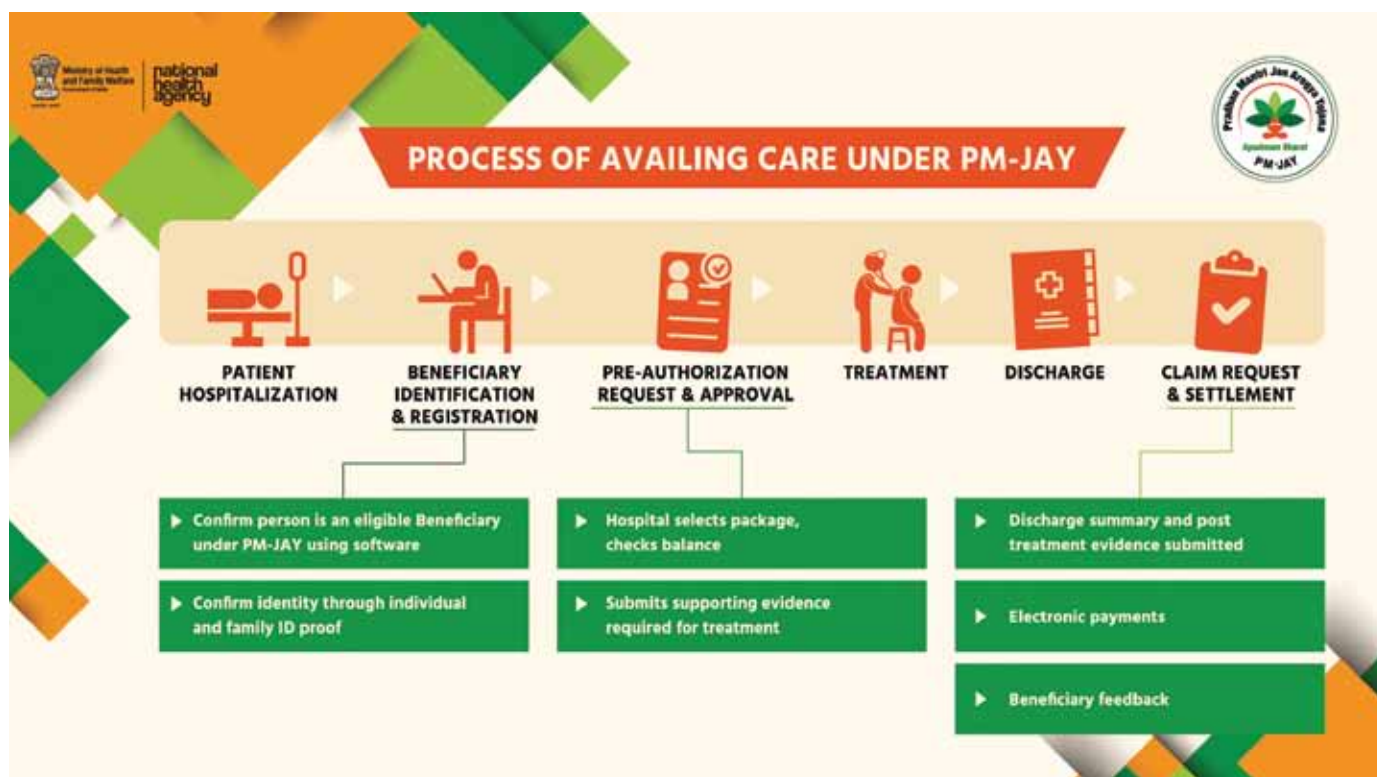
Ayushman Bharat also subsumes multiple existing healthcare schemes, including the RSBY (Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana), launched in the year 2008 by the Ministry of Labour and Employment to provide cashless health insurance scheme with a benefit coverage of INR 30,000 per annum on a family floater basis (for five members), for Below Poverty Line (BPL) families and 11 other defined categories of unorganised workers. Integrating RSBY initiatives into the health system was critical to achieve improved reach, coverage and efficiency.

One of the principles of Ayushman Bharat is co-operative federalism and flexibility to states including a provision, which allows co-alliance with the states. This will ensure appropriate integration with the existing health insurance or protection schemes of various central ministries, departments and state governments (at their own cost).

The scheme has been conceived as cashless and paperless. It will be catered to by public hospitals and empanelled private hospitals

State governments have been allowed to expand NHPM both horizontally and vertically. States have also been given a free hand to choose the modalities for implementation of the scheme through insurance companies or directly through trusts or societies or a mixed model. The process of availing the benefits has been streamlined to ensure comfort for beneficiaries.

While NHPM focuses on the secondary and tertiary healthcare services, the wellness centre programme seeks to provide comprehensive healthcare services, including non-





Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with Jharkhand governor Draupadi Murmu, the state's chief minister Raghubar Das and Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Jagat Prakash Nadda laying the foundation stone for two medical colleges during the launch of Ayushman Bharat in 2018

States are free to choose the modalities for implementation of the scheme through insurance companies, trusts or societies

communicable diseases and maternal and child health services. Under this, the government aims to setup 150,000 health and wellness centres in addition to upgradation of the existing Public Health Centres. These centres will provide free essential drugs and diagnostic services. They have been envisioned to provide holistic medical services including pregnancy care and maternal health services, neonatal and infant health services, child health, chronic communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, management of mental illness, dental care and geriatric care emergency medicine.

The programme envisages working with private sector through their Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and philanthropic organisations to ease the burden on the national and state governments. So far,

more than 10 lakh people have availed free treatment under the scheme and this has resulted in savings of approximately INR 3,000 crore to the nation.

Medical practitioners and those involved in the field are very excited about the scheme. They feel that over time the dynamic nature of the Ayushman Bharat scheme will lead to increased access to quality healthcare and medication. In addition, the unmet needs of the population which remained hidden due to lack of financial resources will be met, resulting in timely treatments, improvement in health outcomes, patient satisfaction, improvement in productivity and efficiency and job creation, thereby leading to improvement in the quality of life of every citizen of the country.

While the discourse rages about how to make the programme more inclusive and effective, its biggest achievement, experts say, is that it has brought the focus back on healthcare, introducing it as a high-level policy programme.





A CELEBRATION OF FAITH

Every 12 years, the city of Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh hosts the Kumbh Mela, the largest public gathering of *sadhus* (holy men) and devotees, and draws millions of pilgrims to the city. We offer glimpses of the event and we also travel across the country to witness the myriad colours of Holi



Right: Thousands of devotees attend the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India; **Above:** A *sadhu* with the iconic *trishul* (trident), at the Kumbh Mela that was held from January 15 to March 4, 2019



Left: Children decked up in colourful traditional costumes at the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj

Below: A *sadhu* rides a horse towards *sangam* - the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati rivers - at dawn during the festival in Prayagraj

Facing page top: A collection of pinwheels for sale at the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj

Facing page bottom: A large 3D logo announcing the “Kumbh Mela” on the banks of River Ganga, in Prayagraj







Facing page top: Newly initiated *sadhus* perform a ritual on the banks of River Ganga during the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj

Facing page bottom: Pilgrims sitting in rows to receive holy *prasad* (food offered to gods) at the Kumbh Mela festival

Right: A *naga sadhu* of Panch Dashnam Juna Akhara takes part in 'Peshvai', a religious procession on the banks of River Ganga, ahead of the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj





Facing page top: People celebrating Holi in Nandgaon in Uttar Pradesh, on 21 March

Facing page bottom: Women rejoicing at Barsana's iconic Radha Rani Temple



Left: Elephants beautifully painted with organic colours during Holi festivities in Jaipur

Bottom: A young boy and girl dressed up as Lord Krishna and Radha being showered with flowers. Celebrating the festival of colours with flowers is an age-old tradition





The austere and grandiose Virupaksha temple, served as the centre of Hampi, the capital city of the erstwhile Vijayanagara empire, the last Dravidian kingdom. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the temple continues to draw scores of visitors ever since its inception in the 7th century AD.



A SYMPHONY IN STONES

The UNESCO world heritage site of Hampi is not just a lost city of majestic ruins, it is also one of the most stunning examples of Indian architectural heritage recognised across the world

BY KALPANA SUNDER



Top: A bird's-eye view of Hampi from the Anjanadri Hill in Anegundi; **Bottom:** The iconic stone chariot near the Vittala temple

The world's largest open air museum, where stones come to life, singing paeans to one of the mightiest empires of ancient India and the patronage of its kings.

That's the fabled lost city of Hampi. Located in Karnataka, with an unearthly, stark landscape of proud ruins, humongous rocks and boulders in unique shapes, glowing a burnished gold against the bright cerulean sky, interspersed by leafy banana fields, Hampi tells the tale of fallen kingdoms and immortal gods. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986, Hampi has been listed second on the New York Times' list of 52 must-see places in 2019.

Chosen by King Harihara as his capital in 1336, history tells us that Hampi was the powerful capital of the Vijayanagara empire (1336 – 1646 AD), which flourished for nearly



300 years across southern India. The name Hampi probably comes from Pampa, the ancient name of River Tungabhadra, which dramatically flows past the ruins. Legend has it that this was also the location of Kishkinda, the capital of monkey king Sugriva, who helped Lord Rama rescue Sita in the epic Ramayana.

MONUMENTAL RUINS

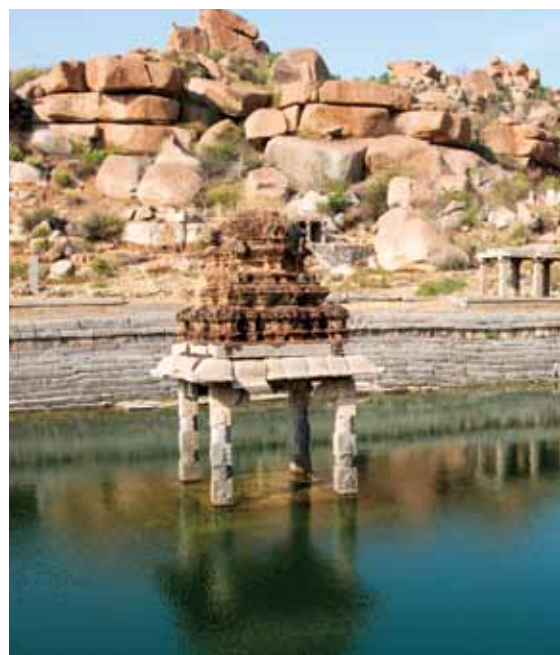
The kings of Vijayanagara kingdom decorated their capital with exquisite temples and palaces, which won the admiration of travellers between the 14th and 16th centuries. Ravaged by time and plunderers, even today Hampi has more than 1,600 monuments, including palaces, forts, memorial structures, temples, pillared halls, baths and gateways.

The monuments of Hampi have been categorised as belonging to two main sections: the Sacred Centre and the Royal Centre. Most

of the buildings in Hampi are constructed from local granite stone, bricks and lime mortar.

In the Sacred Center stands the iconic Vittala temple, an extravagant monument built in the 15th century. The most famous structure here is the stone chariot, almost a symbol of Hampi, which is reminiscent of the Sun Temple in Konark. Legends say its wheels, decorated with intricate floral patterns, were once capable of being turned. Even now, looking at its life-like spokes, it seems as if they would turn at a divine command. Originally a shrine that used to house an image of Garuda, the

Taking a ride on coracle, a traditional local boat, across the Tungabhadra river is one the highlights of Hampi



Left to right: Maa Durga Temple in Anegundi; a sacred water tank called Pushkarini at the Vittala temple complex



Above: Beautiful columns of the ancient ruins of the magnificent Vittala temple; **Facing page:** The ruined yet stunning arches of the Lotus Mahal

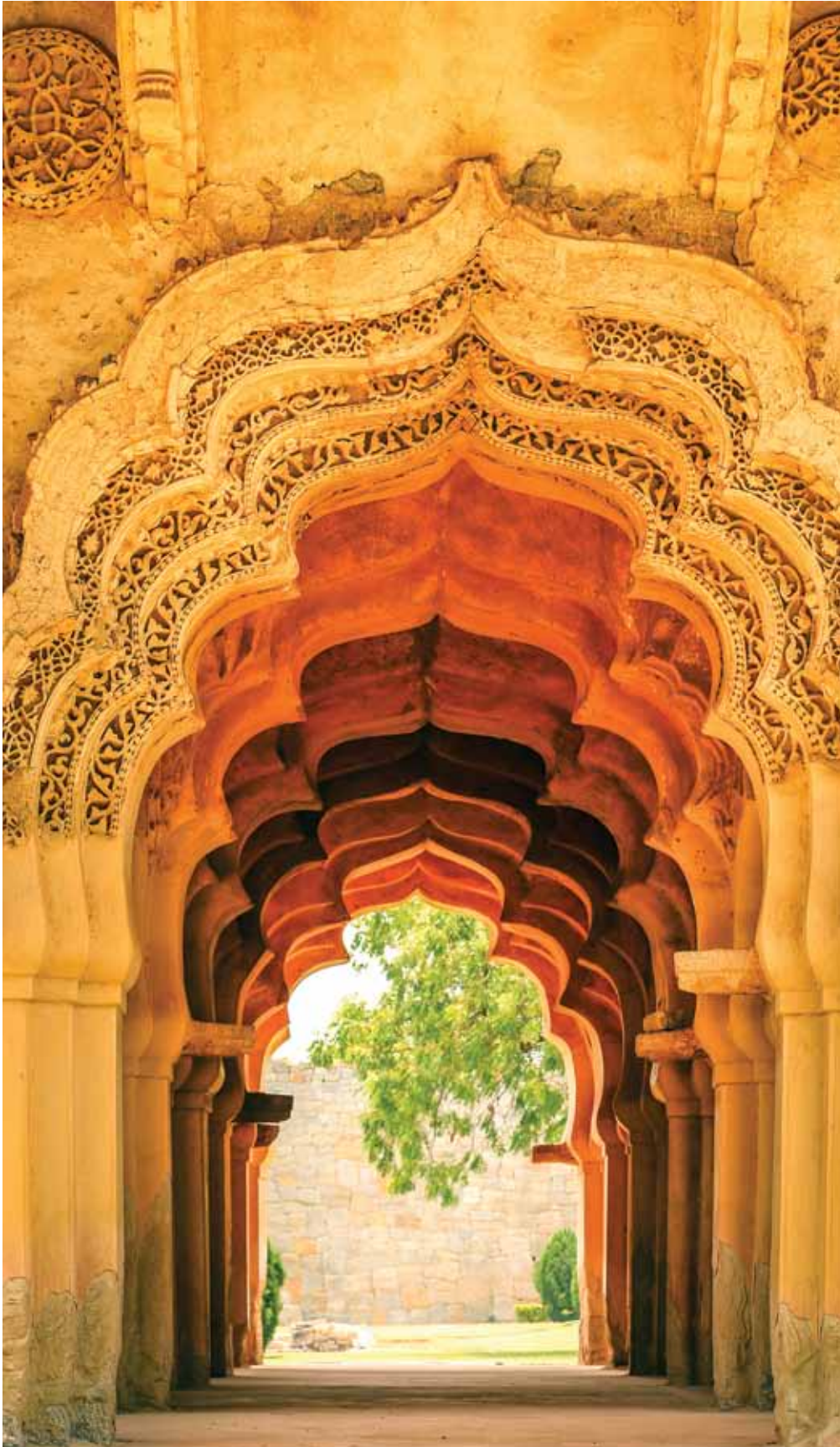
Hampi attracts rock climbers and trekkers with its unique rocky topography

divine mount of Lord Vishnu, the temple's central hall is spectacularly flanked by elephant balustrades and is said to have been used as a venue for cultural performances. One of the main highlights is the cluster of richly carved monolithic pillars among which, some are said to produce the sounds of 81 different musical instruments when tapped with a wooden stick!

The grand Virupaksha temple is another attraction here, with the main shrine being dedicated to Lord Virupaksha, an incarnation of Lord Shiva. The interiors of the temple boast

beautiful carvings depicting various episodes from the Ramayana. Lining the road to this temple are simple stone structures, which once were part of an ancient market. One of the main trading hubs during the Vijayanagara era, traders arrived in Hampi to source and sell a diverse range of goods ranging from horses to precious stones and gems. Many travellers from foreign countries such as Persia, China and Europe had described Hampi's markets as something that they had never seen before.

At the Royal Centre is Mahanavami Dibba, a steep platform built by king Krishnadeva Raya to commemorate his conquest of Odisha (erstwhile Orissa). The sides of the three-tiered platform are covered with carved reliefs of elephants, musicians and dancers, hunters and a round-up of every



Some other monuments



Monkey Temple: Dedicated to Lord Hanumana, the monkey God, it is a boat ride away from the main ruins in Hampi, across Tungabhadra, and situated on the Anjaneya hill.



Sasivekalu Ganesha Temple: One of the major landmarks in the heritage town of Hampi, this temple houses a huge statue of Lord Ganesha, carved out of a single rock.



Hemakuta Hill Temple: On the southern side of Hampi stands the Hemakuta Hill, its gentle slopes dotted with a number of temples and pavilions.



Nandi statue: The monolithic statue of Nandi, Lord Shiva's mount, is an iconic sculpture in Hampi. The statue faces the Virupaksha temple.

TRAVEL TIPS

TEMPLE RUINS

The Vittala temple is the main attraction and is open from 8.30 am to 5.30 pm daily. The elephant stables, which once housed the royal elephants, are open from 8 am to 6 pm daily. The towering Virupaksha Temple, a focal point in the main bazaar, is open from sunrise until sunset. The entrance fee is nominal.

FESTIVALS

In November (or December) during the three-day Hampi Festival (also known as the Vijaya Utsav), the ruins come to life with dance, music, fireworks and puppet shows. Hampi also holds the Purandaradasa Aradhana classical music festival in January/February each year to celebrate the birthday of Purandaradasa, a legendary poet who lived there.

HOW TO REACH

Hampi lies about 350 km from Bengaluru. The nearest railway station is in Hospet (12 km). From Hospet, you can avail an autorickshaw. The nearest airports are Hubli (three hours away) and Belgaum (four and a half hours away). The best time to visit is from November to February. For more information, log onto karnatakaturism.org



aspect of everyday life during that golden age! History says this platform was used by the king and his entourage to view parades, processions, displays of martial art, dance and music performances, especially during the Dusshera festival, which is said to have had its origins here.

Up next is the Queen's Bath with a sunken pool at the centre, which according to local lore, used to be filled with perfumed water and fragrant flowers for women of the royal family to bathe in. It's surrounded by arched corridors with pillars and projecting ornate balconies with windows!

Close by lies the Lotus Mahal, an ochre structure with intricate work, awnings and arches. It is from this complex that women from the royal household witnessed processions, pageantries and celebrations. It's an interesting

A coracle boat ride is one of the most popular activities in Hampi



Left to right: The Hanuman Temple at sunrise; bouldering has emerged as a popular adventure activity among travellers visiting Hampi

Hampi was the powerful capital of the Vijayanagara empire (1336 – 1646 AD)

blend of Islamic, Hindu and Jain architectural styles. To the south of this structure are located the impressive elephant stables with arched ceilings and domes of different shapes!

While many of the monuments here have been restored to their pristine glory, several stand in ruined elegance. But as one walks through the crumbling stones, India's glorious architectural legacy shines through, showcasing one of the most celebrated early civilisations in the history of the world.

CORACLE RIDE

These round boats bob up and down the mighty Tungabhadra river near Hampi, ferrying tourists and locals. A unique experience, a coracle ride across the Tungabhadra is a must-try. The coracle is a traditional boat used in this region for centuries to ferry people

across the river. Traditionally, these boats were constructed with woven cane mats. The modern version of these coracles also uses plastic sheets and bitumen sheets to make them water-proof and sturdier.

ADVENTURE SPORTS

With its unique rocky topography boasting heaps of boulders strewn around, Hampi attracts rock climbers and trekkers, and is a popular site for bouldering as well. In fact, Hampi is often referred to as the bouldering capital of India. Bouldering, which involves climbing rocks, sometimes with the help of harnesses and sometimes without any equipment, is an extreme adventure sport. Adventure-seekers generally rent bicycles and set out to explore Hampi's temple ruins, stopping en route for rock climbing or bouldering. Some of the most famous bouldering sites in Hampi are the Hemakuta Hill, Matanga Hill and the premises of Tiruvengalantha Temple and Malyavanta Raghunatha Temple. Rock climbers can find the largest free standing boulders at Hemakuta Hill.



Personnel of the Indian armed forces pay their respects to the soldiers of the Indian Armed forces at the central obelisk with the Amar Jawan Jyoti (eternal flame) after the inauguration of the war memorial February 25

LET'S SALUTE THE BRAVE

On February 25, 2019, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the National War Memorial in the capital, a monument that pays tribute to the ultimate sacrifice made by our armed forces

BY VINAYAK SURYA SWAMI

They were heroes. Bravehearts who sacrificed their lives to protect the country and its honour, and the nation will remember them forever! That's the message the sombre yet elegant National War Memorial in New Delhi conveys. Inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 25, 2019, the memorial is a tribute to the soldiers of the Indian armed forces who made the supreme sacrifice during the India-China War in 1962, Indo-Pak wars in 1947, 1965 and 1971, Indian Peace Keeping Force Operations in Sri Lanka and in the Kargil conflict of 1999.

The memorial was first proposed 60 years ago, however, the plans to build a memorial dedicated to the men and women of the armed forces took shape when the Government of India approved its construction on October 7, 2015. The area east of the India Gate around the Canopy was found to be the most suited site for the National War Memorial and Museum.

THE DESIGN

For the initial conceptual design, a two-stage

global competition was held between 2016 and 2017, which received a startling 450 entries. Over the course of five stages, 10 initial entries were shortlisted and finally, a design proposed by Yogesh Chandrasan of WeBe Design Lab, Chennai, was selected. The design highlights large open spaces and also ensures that all the 25,942 brave souls of the Indian armed forces, who lost their lives to protect the country, would be remembered with respect. It was paramount that the memorial should invoke a deep and moving experience and serve as a symbol of inspiration for future generations.

The construction process of the memorial began in July 2017 on a 40-acre-plot. The construction company, NCC Ltd, that won the contract to build the memorial, was entrusted with the responsibility of translating sketches of the design into works of art in bronze and sandstone.

IMMORTALISING SACRIFICE

The memorial comprises a 15.5-m-tall obelisk tower with an eternal flame and 16 circular



Top: PM Modi (centre) with Minister of Defence Nirmala Sitharaman and the three chiefs of staff of the Indian Air Force (far left), Army and the Navy (far right) at the memorial; **Bottom:** PM Narendra Modi at the memorial for the inauguration ceremony

walls of honour on which names of the martyrs have been written in gold on granite walls. The pattern of the walls symbolise the *Chakravyuh*, an ancient India war formation referred to in the Mahabharata.

The design of the memorial includes four *chakras* or concentric walls, which signify the defining values and the significance of the Indian armed forces. These are *Amar Chakra*, *Veerta Chakra*, *Tyag Chakra* and *Rakshak Chakra*. Statues of 21 recipients of the Param Vir Chakra, the highest military decoration awarded for displaying distinguished acts of valour during wartime, have also been installed at the Param Yoddha Sthal. This includes busts of three living awardees as well.

At the centre of the premises stands the obelisk that marks the beginning of the *Chakravyuh*. *Amar Chakra* or the Circle of Immortality has the obelisk with the eternal





Top: Tyag Chakra with concentric walls marked with granite tablets, one for each martyr; **Bottom:** Contingents of the Indian Army (far right), Navy and the Air Force at the memorial during its inauguration



The prayer ceremony during the unveiling of the memorial was led by representatives from all major faiths in India



Left: The memorial beautifully decorated with flowers during its inauguration

Bottom: The Param Yodha Sthal, dedicated to the 21 awardees of the PVC, contains busts of brave soldiers decorated with the honour



flame. The flame symbolises the immortality of the spirit of the fallen soldiers with the assurance that the nation will never forget their sacrifice. *Veerta Chakra* or the Circle of Bravery is a covered gallery that exhibits six murals crafted in bronze depicting the valiant battles of the armed forces. *Tyag Chakra* or the Circle of Sacrifice includes the concentric Walls of Honour that are marked with granite tablets, one for each soldier with their name, identification number and their regiment inscribed on it. There are almost 7.5 lakh golden alphabets on the wall.

Rakshak Chakra or the Circle of Protection has a row of trees that is a reassurance to the citizens of the country about their safety against any threat, with each tree representing a soldier ensuring the territorial integrity of the nation. In addition, the Param Yodha Sthal, adjacent to the main complex, is an area dedicated to the 21 awardees of the gallantry award. The actual construction of the memorial began in March 2018 and was completed in a record time of eight months.



Top: The memorial complex is built around the area to the east of the India Gate around the Canopy

Bottom: The PM (left) congratulating the NCC(Nagarjuna Construction Company) Ltd team on the swift completion of the NWM project



Distinguished veterans and esteemed Chiefs of staff from the Indian Armed forces grace the inaugural ceremony of the National War Memorial with their presence

The memorial is open to the public from 9 am to 6.30 pm (Nov to Mar) and from 9 am to 7.30 pm (Apr to Oct)

Around 6 lakh sq ft of sandstone and granite has been used in the construction of the memorial. There are 34 water bodies, including several fountains, that use water from a 1.45-m-lt storage tank designed to harvest rain water. The total cost of the construction is around INR 1,750 million.

The memorial stands in harmony with the existing layout of the India Gate and the symmetry of Rajpath and Central Vista. The solemnity of the ambience of the complex is maintained with an emphasis that is laid on simple architecture and neat landscaping.

THE INAUGURATION

On February 25, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the memorial by lighting the eternal flame at the bottom of the obelisk. He was accompanied by Union minister of Defence Nirmala Sitharaman and the chiefs of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force. The PM also inaugurated the Veerta Chakra gallery. The solemn ceremony was attended by several decorated war veterans. A special prayer meeting showcasing India's secular fabric was also organised and bands of all the three forces performed. Speaking at the ceremony, PM Modi said: "The NWM is a symbol of our soldier's bravery, sacrifice and courage...This memorial will encourage us to live every moment and do something for the nation. My salute to this pilgrimage site of bravery and martyrdom."

With inputs from Lt Col **Sushil Choudhary**
(Retd) GM (Technical), NCC Ltd

THREADS OF BANARAS

Handwoven Banarasi sarees are being revived and the centuries old craft is back in focus

BY SMRITI MORAKA & VINAYAK SURYA SWAMI

As the sun rises over the Ganges, the soft golden rays shimmering over the serene expanse of the river, touching the *ghats*, where devotees offer prayers and boatmen get ready for the day, the ancient city of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh comes to life. A few kilometres away from the *ghats*, tucked into a narrow bylane in the Pilikothi area, where the sun's rays haven't yet reached, a weaver wakes up to his morning routine. He flicks back the piece of old cotton fabric covering his loom. Under the yellow light of the bare bulb hanging from the low roof of the old house, glistens a half woven saree; its bright red silk yarns shimmering, competing with the shine of the pure gold zari *butis* dotting the luxuriously rich fabric. Still stretched on the loom, the saree is almost ready. Wood hits wood, as the weaver presses the pedal of the wooden loom, and the shuttle with the silk weft shoots through the silk warp and the saree gains length, yarn by yarn. Above him, a long line of cardboard pieces with holes punched in them move, controlling the warp yarns to form the

A traditional handloom Banarasi saree in a new-age colour by designer Smriti Morarka







Bunkar

There are several initiatives being made to keep the traditional Banarasi saree alive. One of these is *Bunkar – The last of the Varanasi Weavers*, a documentary that focuses on the lives of the weavers of Varanasi and highlights the nuances of the handloom sector in the city.



Two Banarasi sarees with modern patterns designed by designers Ashaa-Gautam

pattern on the saree. It's hard to believe that it is here that the story of the royal fabric of India, the Banarsi saree, begins.

THE HISTORY

History says that Varanasi was a well-known cotton weaving hub during the early Buddhist period. The fineness of the cotton fabric woven here has been mentioned in Buddhist texts dating back to 500 BC. There are

mentions of fine cotton and silk fabrics used by Buddhist monks. It is said that the skillful weavers of the city, along with the bleaching properties of the water of the Ganges made this city a textile hub. Some historians say the timeless Jataka tales and Pali texts support the evidence of a bustling cloth trade on the banks of the holy river, in Kashi or Varanasi as it was then known. Over the years, as traders arrived by the river, weaving techniques evolved, absorbing various influences from across the country and the world. It was during the rule of Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605) that the focus shifted from cotton to silk with pure gold zari designs. Skilled Muslim weavers, who had migrated to India with the Mughals, had brought with them the art of weaving brocades with intricate designs in gold and silver threads

The Trade Facilitation Centre in Varanasi is an INR 2-bn project being developed to revive the art of the Banarasi weave

— known as *kinkhaab*. The fusion of Hindu and Muslim designs made the fabric even more unique.

Even today, these influences can be seen in the Banarasi saree: as Upada Banarasis (Andhra Pradesh), Patola Banarasis (Gujarat) and Paithani Banarasis (Maharashtra). The technique of weaving a Banarasi saree is complicated, the work is back-breaking and the process time-taking. A reason why, the traditional handloom-woven silk saree from Varanasi went into a decline. What replaced it were either fake silk fabrics or pure silk yardages woven on power looms. After decades of neglect, the traditional weaving techniques have started being revived in the city, thanks to a handful of fashion designers, textile revivalists and the Government of India's initiatives. In the last few years, the craft has seen a renaissance.



Top: Banarasi sarees are today being designed in new-age colours to appeal to a younger audience. **Left:** A weaver working at his loom in Varanasi. **Right:** Zari thread in a shuttle. Traditionally zari is made by wrapping a red silk thread around fine beaten silver thread and then plating it with pure gold



Models wear sarees woven in Varanasi but with contemporary design elements

The Banarasi saree is a true representation of the art, craftsmanship and the creative genius of the skilled weaving community

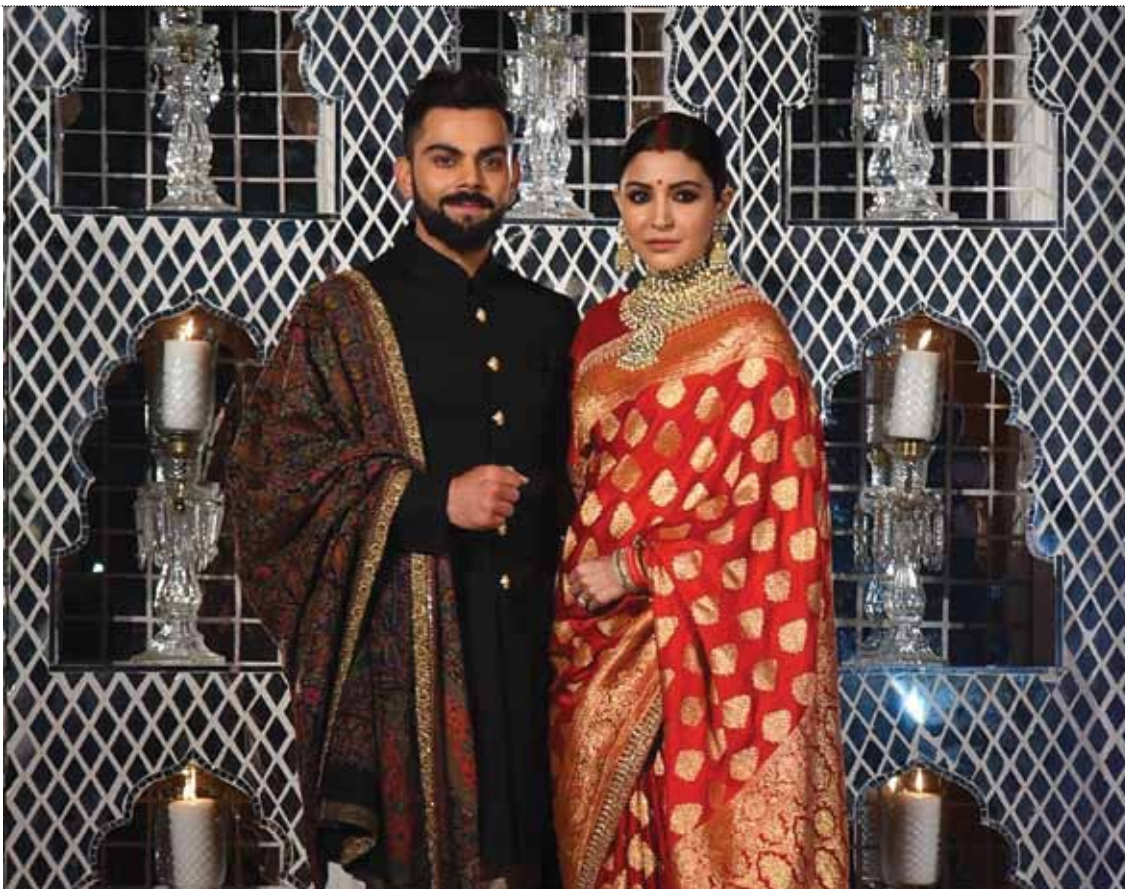
THE REVIVAL

The journey hasn't been easy. The call for revival came at a time when powerlooms had all but displaced the concept of a handwoven Banarasi weave. The new-age fabrics were being produced much faster and at a much lower cost but they lacked the suppleness of a handloom product.

The first step in the process of revival was to encourage the weavers to return to their discarded looms. As discerning customers started demanding finer fabrics, and celebrities started promoting handwoven textiles, weavers have started reclaiming their art.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Traditionally, Banarasi weaves are decorated with a few designs - paisleys, floral and foliage motifs, *jhalla* (strings of leaves) and indigenous scripts called *namavali*. But the new-age customer demanded innovations. So design patterns were tweaked and the yarn's quality was improved to produce sarees that could become heirlooms. New colours were introduced. By using pure zari and the techniques handed down from generation to generation,



Actor Anushka Sharma wore a traditional handloom Banarasi saree (procured by designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee from Varanasi) at one of the functions during her wedding with Virat Kohli, the captain of the Indian cricket team

Traditionally, Banarasi sarees are decorated with a few set designs, including paisleys and flowers

the revival began.

Another important factor is the propagation of a weaver's skill-set because when a generation does not require a particular skill, they don't learn and practice it and it's lost forever. Younger generations of weavers are now being trained by elder weavers so that the heritage lives on. Another landmark was when in 2009 'Banaras Brocades and Sarees' secured Geographical Indication (GI) rights, which prohibits the duplication of the product. This means that no saree or brocade fabric manufactured outside the six identified districts of Uttar Pradesh can be legally sold under the name of Banarasi saree and brocade.

Then came the Government of India's Handloom Mark, the hallmark that defines a handcrafted textile product, distinguishing it from machine-made competition. In 2014, another impetus to the industry was the Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC), the foundation stone for which was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Now that the community has accumulated a certain number of buyers, it's more about the respect, and becoming a catalyst for conversations in this regard. The traditional threads of Banaras are on right track as the weave is rapidly becoming a trademark of authentic Indian craftsmanship. Revival is all about changing the narrative, interluding it with questions that allow the weavers to earn respect, to be known for the work that they do.

-Smriti Morarka is a textile revivalist and designer of the brand Tantuvvi

FORGOTTEN TALES

From the story of a social activist who went on to become a Nobel Laureate to the brave act of a foot soldier, the Indian film industry is bringing unknown heroes back to life

BY AARTI KAPUR SINGH



Biopics are always a safe bet in Bollywood, as they will always find favour with masses looking for inspiration. Biopics have now become a medium for the Indian film industry to immortalise the heroic deeds that were previously lost amongst the pages of history. Beginning with *Manikarnika*, the story of Rani Lakshmibai, to *Kesari*, the true story of one of the most heroic last stands at a battle in history - based on the Battle of Saragarhi in 1897, this year too, the trend of biopics is at an all-time high.

NOT JUST CELEBRITY BIOPICS

Actor Akshay Kumar is keen on telling the stories of people who may not be celebrities but those who made a difference to the world. He portrayed Arunachalam Muruganantham in his movie *Pad Man* last year. The film told the story of Muruganantham, a social entrepreneur from Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, who invented a low-cost

A poster of the film *Kesari*



sanitary pad-making machine that became an important tool aiding in menstrual hygiene for rural women and also created jobs for them. In his next venture, *Kesari*, the actor reprises the role of Hawaldar Ishar Singh, from the 36th Sikh Regiment of the British Indian Army, who along with his band of 20 soldiers, made an iconic last stand at the battle of Saragarhi in 1897.

Speaking about how passionate he is about the film, he says, “The forgotten battle of Saragarhi is a real story and one of the most heroic last stands. The world talks about the battle of Sparta, in which King Leonidas of the ancient Greek country and 300 of his brave

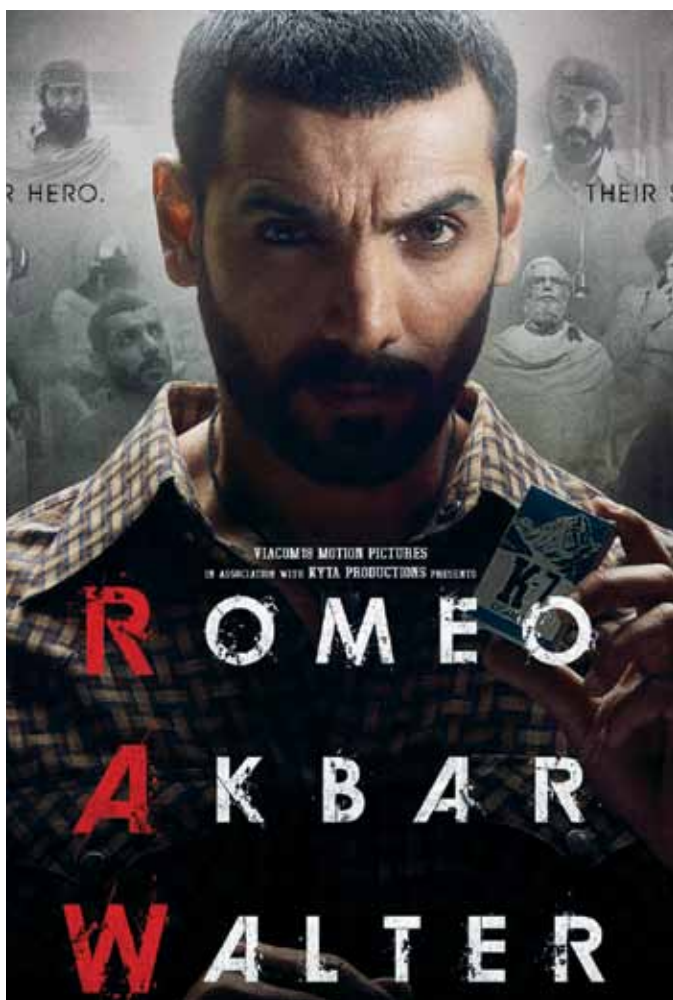
warriors stood against an army of a million soldiers. But in the battle of Saragarhi, it was just a group of 21!” According to history, the British Indian contingent of 21 Sikh soldiers was attacked by around 10,000 Afghans and the brave Sikh fighters decided to fight to death.

The actor also has a strong opinion on highlighting the struggles of heroes whom time has forgotten. “As Indians we don’t always accord much importance to our own history and our heroes. Just because it wasn’t documented enough does not mean Saragarhi was not important. Something becomes important for us only when there is a ratification or stamp of approval from any quarter. There is so much history behind our country, our race - we need to take pride in that.”

Even actor Parineeti Chopra will be seen recreating the hardwork and dedication of sportstar Saina Nehwal’s badminton career in a biopic expected to be released in 2019. The actor will be joining the likes of Shah Rukh Khan, Farhan Khan and Priyanka Chopra who have been part of biopics in the past. Actor Siddharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani will join forces with director Karan Johar for a biopic based on the heroic actions of Captain Vikram Batra of the Indian Army during the Kargil war in 1999.

In the same vein, veteran actor Jackie Shroff, who plays a character inspired by RN Kao, the founding father of Indian intelligence agency Research & Analysis Wing, (RAW) in the film *Romeo Akbar Walter*, says the trend of bringing the story of the unsung on celluloid should continue. “I am glad I have got an

Regional cinema is also looking for inspiration from the lives of everyday people who achieved the extraordinary





Clockwise from top left: Janhvi Kapoor on the sets of her upcoming movie based on the life of IAF Pilot Gunjan Saxena (left); Deepika Padukone will be seen portraying acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal in her next movie

Facing Page: The film *Romeo Akbar Walter* was inspired from true events



The trend of biopics is at an all-time high and looks like it's here to stay

opportunity to tell the story of one such person who served the country on screen. Playing this role is a feather in my cap. India has had so many heroes, who the people of the country have forgotten. Bollywood, with its mass appeal, should bring more of such stories to life and remind the country of these sacrifices.”

Actor Hrithik Roshan will be portraying the life and times of legendary mathematician Anand Kumar in his next release, *Super 30*. Kumar has gained popularity due to his innovative Super 30 programme, which prepares aspiring IITians from economically-backward sections to clear one of the most difficult IIT-entrance exams.

ORDINARY PEOPLE EXTRAORDINARY STORIES

Actors are favouring the trend of stories that have not been told before. After *MS Dhoni: The Untold Story*, actor Sushant Singh Rajput will reprise the story of another sportsman on the silver screen. This time, it's India's first

Paralympic gold medalist Murlikant Petkar in a biopic that is being directed by Prashant Singh. The erstwhile boxer and Armyman suffered irreversible injuries in the 1965 war against Pakistan. As his career as a soldier ended, he continued to serve the country and trained himself to become a sportsman. He took up swimming, table tennis and javelin and won a gold medal in swimming at the 1970 Commonwealth Games as well as the Paralympic games in Germany in 1972 along with setting a world record in freestyle swimming the same year. “Such compelling stories of extraordinary people need to be retold,” says Singh.

Just like Murlikant Petkar, another paralympian, Deepa Malik, will find a portrayal on screen in a film that's being produced by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani. The sportswoman is India's first and only woman

OTHERS IN THE LIMELIGHT

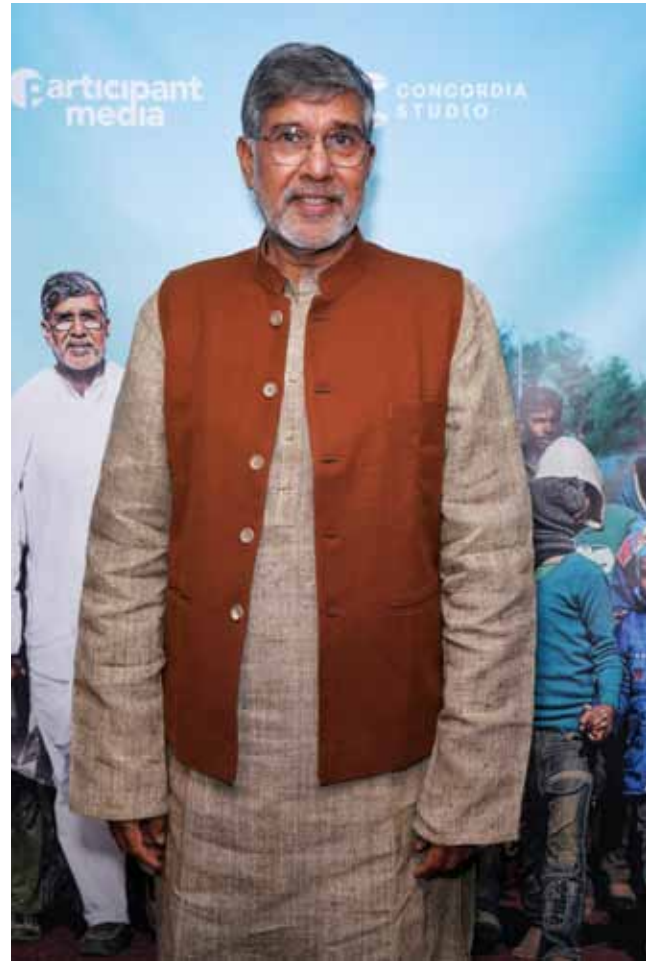
- Actor Hrithik Roshan will be portraying the life and times of legendary mathematician Anand Kumar in his next release, *Super 30*. Kumar is famed for his extremely popular Super 30 programme, which prepares aspiring IITians from economically-backward sections to crack the entrance exams, with an incredible success rate.
- Actress Deepika Padukone is set to shoot for a film on the life and struggle of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal.
- Janhvi Kapoor will be essaying the role of IAF pilot Gunjan Saxena, who flew into combat zone during the Kargil War in 1999. Saxena made history as she flew into the war zone, a feat which had not been allowed for or achieved by a lady officer in the IAF. She was later bestowed with the Shaurya Chakra, an Indian military decoration.
- Actor Sushant Singh Rajput, who portrayed cricketer MS Dhoni in his biopic will now be seen as Paralympic gold medalist Murlikant Petkar in a biopic that is being directed by Prashant Singh.



Above : Murlikant Petkar receiving the Padma Shri award from President Ram Nath Kovind

to win a (silver) medal at the Paralympic Games in 2016. Malik was left paralysed chest down after a surgery to remove a tumor in her spinal column. The athlete went on to win 54 golds at the national level and 13 at the international level in swimming, javelin and shot put. She received the Arjuna Award in 2012 and the Padma Shri in 2019. The film will reportedly go on floors early next year.

Nobel Laureate and Indian children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi's life moved actor Boman Irani enough to give a nod to a film based on the life of the founder of Bachpan Bachao Andolan. "Kailash and his team have rescued more than 83,000 kids from slavery, child labour and trafficking. I had to just hear the one-minute narration that was about a girl,



Clockwise from top left: Mathematician Anand Kumar with his students ; Akshay Kumar interacts with Indian para-athlete Deepa Malik ; Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi

who is looking for her brother, to grab the film with both hands. Later, the research and the reading I did, actually gave me goose-bumps. I think I am lucky and honoured that I will play this activist on screen,” says Boman. The movie, to be directed by National Award-winning director Brahmanand Singh, tells the story of a girl, Jhalki, who goes to Satyarthi in search of her brother, who is a child labourer.

REGIONAL DIALOGUE

It is not just the Hindi movie industry, but even regional cinema is looking for inspiration from the lives of everyday people who achieved the extraordinary. Daya Bai, known as Mercy Mathew, an activist from Kerala, has dedicated her life to the betterment of tribals in Madhya

Pradesh by setting up a school, empowering ignored villages and starting a campaign to eradicate poverty. She will soon have a Malayalam biopic, titled *Daya Bai* that chronicles her life. Directed by Sree Varun, the movie stars actor Bidita Bag, in the role of the social activist. Last year *Mahanati*, a Telugu film about the rise of female South Indian superstar Savitri, became a superhit.

While stories of celebrities like Gulshan Kumar and Saina Nehwal are being adapted for the big screen, there are achievers who may not be as famous but whose accomplishments cannot be undermined. Deservedly so, they are about to have their stories told on celluloid. This year, these heroes will reclaim their space in the sun.





THE OLD GRAIN'S TALE

With the revival of the Indian millet and its growing popularity as the new supergrain, chefs across the country are using it to cook up a storm and create new and nutritious flavour profiles

BY MADHULIKA DASH

Facing page:
Wheat porridge with chicken and pumpkin makes for an amazing breakfast option which is both packed with flavour and rich in nutrients

Barnyard, foxtail, pearl, proso, sorghum... these may sound like jargons to some. But for weight-watchers and nutritionists, these are the go-to items to be included in every balanced diet plan. These are some of the millets commonly cultivated in India and consumed in everyday meals in earlier days. As these little super-grains gain prominence across the world as a healthy substitute to rice and wheat, Indians are

going back to their roots to rediscover millet recipes. Be it *ragi*, *jowar* or *bajra*, millets are said to be high in nutritional value and their low glycaemic index makes them suitable for inclusion in weight-loss diets. Says therapist nutritionist, Sveta Bhassin, "Millets are a rich source of fibre, minerals like magnesium, phosphorous, iron, calcium, zinc and potassium, and are gluten-free too. In other words, these are miracle pills." While millets came into the culinary limelight a

few years ago, it is now that they have gained popularity and have entered mass kitchens and restaurants.

THE HISTORY

Millets have been in use since ancient times in the Indian subcontinent. The grain, which needs very little water to grow and can be cultivated in some of the most difficult terrains, is even recommended in Ayurveda. *Kanjee (kanji)*, a porridge that dates to the early Chola period, is a perfect example of how millets were very much a part of ancient India. Made much like *khichdi*, this recipe was

recommended during seasonal changes, especially during the onset of monsoon. Mildly flavoured, *kanjee* uses a simple spice mix of herbs and pepper to create a one-bowl meal, which folklore has it, was administered to traders and seafarers before they travelled. During ancient times, millet wasn't a grain of the poor that it later became. It was enjoyed both by the rich, the royals and the commoners – the status quo not changing even as rice and wheat arrived in from China and Greece sometime during the later half of the ancient period.

PAIR PERFECT

What has worked towards the revival of millets, says award-winning chef Abhijit Saha, is their versatility. "Millets of all the grains, even when they have their own taste, can pair beautifully with any ingredient. Traditionally,

Millets can be paired with any ingredient and can even replace staple ingredients in popular dishes



Top: Bajra roti served with green chilly; **Right:** Halwa made from finger millet and garnished with dry fruits



Clockwise from top left: Delicious and healthy *upma* made of finger millet *ragi* noodles; *ragi roti*; nutritious *chikki*; *roti* made from finger millet

they were easy to pair with other products when communities moved from one place to another.” Concur chef Sharad Dewan (of The Park Hotel, Kolkata), who has created interesting pairings with millets and local vegetables like *pui shaak* (Malabar spinach).

Chef Sabyasachi Gorai (chefpreneur of the restaurant Lavaash By Saby) says that millets can be paired beautifully with both meat and vegetables, thanks to their earthy flavour and amazing texture.

During ancient times, millets were enjoyed by the rich, the royals and the commoners alike

Chef Mir Zafar Ali (of the Leela Palace, Bengaluru), says he has successfully used millet in a sweet potato shepherd pie, where the grain was used in place of meat and a millet pizza, where a mix of millet was used as a base. “Once you learn the trick of cooking with millets, the magic happens. They can be paired with any other ingredient or even replace conventional ingredients in popular dishes,” says the chef.

THE RENAISSANCE

The rise in popularity of millets in the past few years can be attributed to the new-found knowledge about their nutritional value and the zeal of chefs to make food sustainable. “Cooking with local grains like millets means

MILLET ADVANTAGE

Experts say that the rising popularity of millets could help solve several problems. The cultivation of this native crop could make agriculture more sustainable, eliminate malnutrition and also reduce the demand for water in farming, as millets need very little water to be cultivated.

TIPS TO COOK WITH THE GRAIN

- Always soak millets in hot water after you have washed them thoroughly.
- They can be used as substitute to conventional grains in any dish.
- Use millets in *upma* or in place of rice.
- Millets can be used in granola bars or nutri bowls.
- Can also be used as baby food.
- Millet porridge is a great substitute for oats or cereal at breakfast.

KNOW YOUR MILLETS

Barnyard millet: *Kuthiravali* in Tamil / *Odal* in Telugu / *Oodhalu* in Kannada / *Kavadapullu* in Malayalam / *Sanwa* in Hindi. It is a high source of iron and fibre.

Foxtail millet: *Thinai* in Tamil / *Kirra* in Telugu / *Thinna* in Malayalam / *Navane* in Kannada / *Kangni* in Hindi. It is rich in minerals and vitamins.

Finger Millet: *Ragi* in Kannada / *Kelvaragu* in Tamil / *Ragulu* in Telugu / *Koovarugu* in Malayalam / *Mundua* in Hindi. This grain is easily digested.

Little Millet: *Samai* in Tamil / *Same* in Kannada / *Sama* in Telugu / *Chama* in Malayalam / *Kutki* in Hindi. It is a good source of iron and fibre.

Pearl Millet: *Sajje* in Kannada / *Sajjalu* in Telugu / *Kambu* in Tamil / *Kambam* in Malayalam / *Bajra* in Hindi. A high source of protein.



lower carbon footprints. These grains can be cultivated around us and in any kind of climatic condition,” says chef Gorai.

In fact, it's this awareness that is making many Indians shift from supergrains popular in western countries like quinoa to Indian millets. In parts of the country, where millets never went out of the kitchen, the shift was faster and more prominent. An excellent example of this is in Bengaluru, where the drive to promote millets has seen greater success with chefs indulging in this grain and creating interesting versions. In southern parts of India, millets like finger millet or *ragi*, have continued to be a staple. From *rotis* to *mudde* (a soft and moist ball had with curries), *ragi* is a mainstay in many homes in states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Right: *Ragi dosa* is a nutritious pancake mostly had in South India

Facing page above: A woman in Andhra Pradesh using quern stones to grind finger millet seeds into *ragi* flour

Facing page above: A woman in an Indian village mixing hot water and millet flour in a pan, kneading to make a smooth dough



The cultivation of millets can make agriculture more sustainable with a reduced demand for water and a nutrient rich crop

Elsewhere, it was people's growing awareness about healthy eating that helped. "The change started gaining pace last summer and we realised that our customers loved the food. They were eager to try and even take home the recipes," says chef Ajay Anand (of Pullman Aerocity, New Delhi). The chef now works extensively with the Government of Karnataka to promote all varieties of millets and some of his dishes include millet *alambre* and *ragi* tacos with pumpkin and millet filling.

The complex nutrition composition, gluten- and lactose-free properties of millets have made them popular among those practicing alternate eating. "Millets are an easy solution for those who are taking on alternative eating, including vegans. Traditional Indian recipes and the heirloom knowledge of cooking

with millets helped us use them to their full potential," says chef Balpreet Singh Chadha, (AnnaMaya, Andaz, New Delhi).

Such success resulted in the millet finally breaking the glass ceiling of "alternative" to becoming a serious ingredient on which menus could be dedicated. While the revival of millets became a reason for several chefs to experiment with it, for many like chef Akshraj Jodha (ITC Windsor, Bengaluru), it was an opportunity to restore a traditional cooking wisdom. Talking about *bajra ghaat*, a traditional variation of the *khichdi*, he says that the Rajasthani dish was cooked so that people who had to travel to far flung destinations, remained full for a longer time period. "It was a grandmother's antidote to treating lethargy, weakness, stomach issues and even high blood pressure," he says.

So as consumers eat, chefs promote and shelves of superstores fill up with Indian millets and their products, this variety of grain that was once the staple of Indian cuisine is truly on its way to being revived. After years of being ignored, the millets are making a comeback.

GOVERNANCE AT A CLICK

Digital India, a flagship initiative of the Government of India, is an ambitious programme to transform the country into a digitally-empowered society and knowledge-centric economy

BY VINAYAK SURYA SWAMI



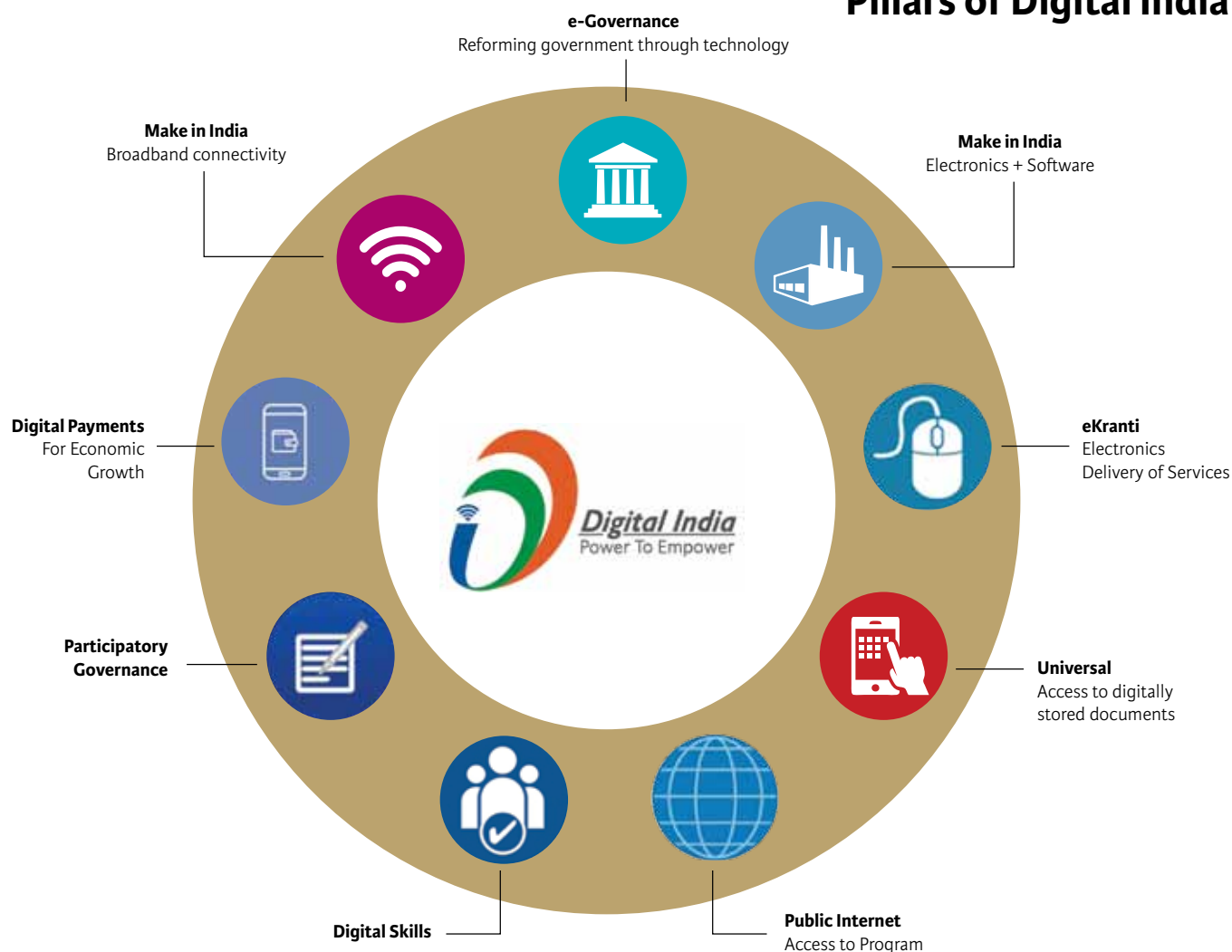
Considering the uni-directional thrust that is required to boost transparency and e-governance in the policy making process of the country and to connect the nation in its entirety, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Digital India initiative in 2015. In the last four years, Digital India has become one of the most defining government portals pegged to orient the direction of the numerous government schemes in the coming years. The involvement of states, Union Territories

and even villages in the national e-governance plan has provided the much needed boost required for the country's digital overhaul. The portal has also been identified as a core area for generation of jobs in rural areas and smaller towns.

THE VISION

Planned as an initiative to plug the leaks in the process of governance, the three visions of the programme are: "Digital Infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen," "Governance

Pillars of Digital India



and services on demand” and “Digital empowerment of citizens.”

Digital Infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen aims to provide high speed Internet for delivery of services to citizens and it has become a highlight with BharatNet that has already connected 1.15 lakh villages to an extensive optical fibre network via Common Service Centres.

Providing governance and services on demand includes seamlessly integrating services across all state departments and jurisdictions so that all services are available on real time from online and mobile platforms.

The third area for development of the initiative focusses on the digital empowerment of citizens, which aims at universal digital literacy.

JAM TRINITY

Over the last three years, Digital India has laid a robust foundation for India to embark on the digital transformation of the entire governance infrastructure. The key aspects of this transformation include linking every citizen to the portal for financial inclusion. The two-step transformation is being achieved by identifying every citizen

PILLARS OF THE DIGITAL INDIA SCHEME

- Broadband Highways
- Universal Mobile Connectivity
- Public Internet Access Programme
- Reforming Governance Through Technology
- eKranti Participatory Governance
- Make in India
- Digital Skills
- Digital Payments

CHANGING INDIA'S DIGITAL PROFILE THROUGH INCLUSION

- Aadhar- 1.23 billion
- Mobile users- 1.18 billion
- Bank accounts- 1.57 billion
- Internet users- 500 million
- Smartphone users-380 million
- Operational Panchayats online- 121 million
- Operational CSC- 3.05 million

As India leapfrogs into increased internet penetration, the country has seen a steady rise in the number of internet users in the last few years, from 375 million in October'15 to an estimated 500 million by June'18. A report by McKinsey Global Institute says India's Digital Index rose by 56 per cent during 2014-2017, from 18 to 29 on a scale of 1-100. This has placed the country second in terms of growth among 17 emerging and mature digital economies.

According to statistics of mid-2018, close to 1.2 billion Indians have been covered under the Aadhaar programme.

The Digital India portal has also been identified as a core area for generation of jobs in rural areas and smaller towns

and by giving every citizen a digital identity that is unique, lifelong, online, authenticable and then linking it with the existing government schemes. This transformation is based on the JAM trinity, which links the Jan Dhan programme (Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana is a National Mission for Financial Inclusion to ensure access to financial services) with its beneficiaries identified by their Aadhar (a unique number issued to all residents of India) numbers and this is being aided by the country's rapidly developing mobile data network. As of now, upto 1.23 billion citizens have been successfully linked to the scheme and with the development of Digital India's rural mission, and the statistics are steadily rising. For digital governance in India to excel, there was a need for a strong foundation, and the trinity has offered that.

Another aspect of the Digital India programme is the integration of financial services through UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance) portal. The portal aims to provide upto 1,200 major services offered by Central and State government departments, local bodies and other utility services from private organisations directly to the beneficiaries by recognising their unique identification number.

THE WAY FORWARD

The initiative has had resounding success in the first phase with exponential increase in various sectors

aimed at digital inclusion. A total of INR 5.3 lakh Cr have been disbursed with the total savings of INR 90,000 Cr. With INR 33.19 Cr unbanked currency brought into mainstream financial circulation by upto 80 per cent adults with functional bank accounts.

In the coming years, Digital India's second phase aims to achieve complete digitisation by expediting the development in the core areas of:

Telecom infrastructure – Introduction of 5G technology across all platforms and the broadening of BharatNet for increased rural outreach.

Human Capital- Introduction of massive online course under the SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active – Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) initiative with collaborations and inductions of several centre(s) of excellence in emerging technology.

Digital Service- Expansion of the existing cloud server (Meghraj) and the inclusion of a comprehensive artificial intelligence (AI) programme.

The inclusion of the AI software alone has the potential to add \$ 1 trillion to the economy by 2035 with Indian languages, agriculture, finance, education and healthcare as the key areas of development.

The successful completion of the second phase of the initiative, with the complete digitisation of all government schemes has been forecasted by the year 2025 with an increase by the factor of 3.5, which will increase the total to an approximate but staggering \$ 1 trillion.



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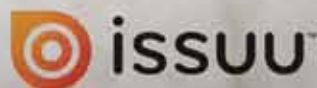


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CONSULAR GRIEVANCES MONITORING SYSTEM

01 Step

Click on “Register (New User)” and fill required details

02 Step

Click on “Activation” link sent in email (or OTP sent in SMS to Indian Mobile Holders) to activate the account.

03 Step

Log in to the Consular Grievances Monitoring System (MADAD).

04 Step

Click on “Register Grievances” link to fill details of your grievances.

05 Step

Click on “Track Grievances Status” link to View latest status and processing done on your grievance.



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