

CONNECTING INDIA WITH ITS DIASPORA



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PRAVASI BHARATIYA

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Our ties with Gulf countries have been reciprocal — both have gained a lot

— Shri Vayalar Ravi,  
Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs

# GULF LINKS

The nearly six million Indians in the Gulf are making a significant contribution to the development of their host nations

MINISTRY OF  
OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS

PLUS

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AN INITIATIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS

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## Diaspora meet in Amsterdam

**THE ANNUAL** Indian Diaspora conference in the Netherlands will be held this year in Amsterdam city on September 30, *EuAsia News* has reported.

Organised by the Foundation for Indian Diaspora in Europe, the one-day conference is to focus on improving inter-generational relations as well as relations between different groups of Indian diaspora in the Netherlands.

The Indian Ambassador to the Netherlands, Bhaswati Mukherjee, Dutch officials, Indian and Dutch experts, and representatives from various social and business organisations are expected to participate in the event, said the conference organisers.

The conference aims to strengthen the links between various Indian diaspora groups and organisations, promote the role of Indian diaspora in Dutch society, and intensify and broaden ties between India and the Netherlands in various fields.



Bhaswati Mukherjee

The Netherlands has the second largest population of people of Indian origin in Europe with an estimated 200,000 people, mainly from Suriname, and non-resident Indians (NRIs) from India.

## Punjab to launch card for NRIs

**THE PUNJAB** government has announced that it will soon launch NRI cards for Punjabis living abroad to identify them for official purposes and facilitate various services for them.

Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal, accompanied by NRI Affairs Minister Bikram Singh Majithia and former union minister Balwant Singh Ramoowalia,



has asked the NRI Affairs Department to immediately work out the details for NRI cards and implement it at the earliest.

Badal said Punjab has to involve NRIs in the process of development by assuring them total support of the state government. He said that all NRIs will be able to apply for this card on the website of the NRI department.

He said the card, besides giving an identity to the NRIs for official purposes, would assure quality medicare to them and offer attractive discounts on shopping in Punjab.

Majithia said that a comprehensive website and portal of the NRI Affairs Department has been finalised and would become operational soon.

Badal said that a 24-hour NRI helpline should also be functional where NRIs would be able to register their complaints and get a time-bound response on action taken.

He said that these steps would inculcate confidence amongst NRIs who feel insecure sitting in a foreign land about their land, property and investments in Punjab.

## Indian mission launches ayurveda centre in Trinidad

**THE INDIAN** High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago has launched a centre for ayurveda following a growing interest in the Caribbean in the traditional Indian system of medicine. The centre was inaugurated by Trinidad and Tobago's Minister of Local Government Surujattan Rambachan recently.

The minister also announced that a Chair of Ayurvedic Medicine will be launched soon at the University of the West Indies in St. Augustine.

He said this would be the second such academic programme to be launched at the university, the first being the Chair of Asian Studies. Rambachan said the steps followed several agreements signed between Trinidad and Tobago's Indian-



origin Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh during Persad-Bissessar's historic visit to India in January.

Rambachan said relations between India and Trinidad and Tobago have moved swiftly from mere cultural and religious to that of in-depth economic, trade and investment. He also heaped praises on Indian High Commissioner Malay Mishra, calling him "the entrepreneurial high commissioner".

Mishra said Trinidad and Tobago was the second country outside India to have an ayurveda centre after Malaysia. He said people can visit the centre and access all forms of information, brochures, publications and videos on ayurveda.

## Kerala woos NRI investment for medical college

**THE KERALA** government has given its approval to set up a ₹300 crore hospital and medical college in which the diaspora will be allowed to invest, it was announced recently. The Kerala Institute of Medical Education and Research will come up in Alappuzha district in three years, an official said. State Chief Minister Oommen Chandy cleared the project at a recent cabinet meeting.

In his budget speech, state Finance Minister K.M. Mani had announced plans to set up five government medical colleges in the state. This is the first of them. An official told *IANS* that the state-of-the-art institute would have a split structure — a committee of government officials to run the hospital and a management to run the college.

Another committee would look after the infrastructure development of the hospital and the college. "The project will be a reality in three years. Interested non-resident Keralites can invest in the project and will get shares," said the official.



"The institute will be built on public-private partnership model and will be run by a government-appointed committee."

The government has allocated around 25 acres for the project near the National Thermal Power Corp plant in Alappuzha.

"The government's contribution would work out to be 26 percent of the equity. The rest will come from investment made by the diaspora. Those who will buy the insti-

tute's shares will get one seat every year for admission to an MBBS course," said the official. "Since the gestation period for an institute like this will be longer compared to other ventures, the diaspora wanting to invest should be aware that there will be no profit for over 10 years," added the official.

This is the second project after the Kanur international airport where the government has asked the diaspora to invest.

## Latin America looks to India

**CHILE, CUBA** and Venezuela, the troika of Latin America's premier grouping, have sought closer strategic and economic partnership with India and described New Delhi as "an emerging power" that can play an important role in transforming the region. Seeking to scale up ties with India in diverse areas, Chile's Foreign Minister Alfredo Moreno Charme listed the many advantages of India and the Latin American region working together to transform their societies and economies.

"India is an emerging power. Closer cooperation will open new areas of cooperation in economic, social and cultural fields," Charme said while speaking at a recent seminar organised by the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) on 'Recent Developments in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Region'.

M. Ganapathi, Secretary (West) in the External Affairs Ministry, also made a strong pitch for an all-round acceleration of ties. "It is a win-win situation. The oppor-

tunities are manifold and tremendous. We are looking for a pan-continental engagement with the Community of Latin American Countries (CELAC)," he said.

"The LAC region was once considered a distant horizon for Indian diplomacy. Now there is a multi-dimensional transformation of relations," said Rajiv Bhatia, Director-General, ICWA.

The India-troika meeting culminated in both sides agreeing to set up joint committees in diverse sectors.



## India, S. Korea tie-up for electoral reforms

**INDIA AND** South Korea signed an agreement to collaborate in strengthening institutions and processes for democracy, good governance and rule of law in the two countries.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed recently by Chief Election Commissioner of India V.S. Sampath and the chairperson of the National Electoral Commission of Republic of Korea, Justice Nung Hwan Kim.

"We are aware of Korea's formidable record in democratic functioning and good electoral practices," said Sampath.

The MoU has been signed with the common mission of strengthening institutions and processes for democracy, good governance and rule of law in the two countries through combined efforts.

The Korean Election Commission is now the chair of the Association of Asian Election Authorities and India is the vice-chair.





## India-US defence ties on rise

**IN A** bid to boost defence sales to India, the U.S. is putting forward the “technical and political advantages” of its Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme of government-to-government transfer without competitive bidding.

“We have reached out to new partners and emerging markets where we see the defence trade growing,” Andrew J. Shapiro, Assistant Secretary in the State Department’s Bureau of Political-Military Affairs told the Defence Trade Advisory Group.

Outlining the U.S. efforts to expand defence trade, Shapiro, who was in India for the first political-military talks in six years, said they “sought to better familiarise the Indian government with our

system and to address any concerns they may have”.

“We think the U.S.-India defence and trade relationship would benefit from linking defence sales with broader strategic goals,” he said. “That’s why we specifically articulated the technical and political advantages that FMS offers.”

One of the major goals of the political-military talks in New Delhi was to make progress in advancing the defence trade, he said, noting that cumulative defence sales to India had grown from virtually zero to more than \$8 billion since 2008.

The Obama administration views the American defence industry as an integral part of its efforts to advance U.S. national security and foreign policy, Shapiro said.

## IAS coaching centres eye NRI candidates

**HOPING TO** touch a patriotic chord, private coaching academies are increasingly looking at Indians settled abroad and their children and selling them the idea of taking the civil services exam to serve the motherland as a career bureaucrat.

It may be a novel idea for the NRI (Non-Resident Indian) community — those with Indian citizenship — but some institutes are confident that it is one that will hit home.

The New Delhi-based Chanakya IAS Academy, for instance, held an interaction session in Dubai for NRI civil services aspirants in July. “The concept of preparing their children to serve as Indian bureaucrats excited many NRI parents in the Gulf,” said A.K. Mishra, chief of the academy.

“Many NRIs and their children agreed that joining Indian civil services was an ideal way to serve their motherland,” Mishra, who is also a motivation and success guru, said.

According to Mishra, civil services exam coaching was a multimillion rupee industry, fuelled by over 500 institutions spread across the country. Metro cities, especially New Delhi and Chennai, have a high density of such specialised service providers.

Mishra said NRIs need to be made aware of opportunities in civil services as, at present, their interest are centred around professional courses.

## First Boeing C-17s to arrive in India by mid-2013

**THE FIRST** of 10 C-17 Globemaster III heavy airlifters, being built by Boeing for India, underwent a major production step with a recent ceremony at the Boeing facility in Long Beach, California. India is the largest C-17 customer outside the U.S.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will induct the first of the 10 C-17 Globemaster-III planes purchased from the U.S. in a \$4.1 billion deal in June 2013.

Consul General of India in San Francisco, N. Parthasarathi, drove a rivet into the aircraft to mark the integration of the forward, centre and aft fuselages and wing assembly,



a key programme milestone known as the ‘major join.’ The ceremony was attended by Boeing, Indian Embassy staff, senior Indian Air Force and local elected officials.

“The defence ties between India and the U.S. is an important dimension of our strategic partnership. This momentous occasion, where we see India’s first C-17 take shape, further strengthens our growing relationship,” said Parthasarathi.

“This is a proud day for the highly skilled Boeing workforce and our newest customer to celebrate a major production milestone,” said Bob Ciesla, Boeing Airlift vice president and C-17 programme manager.

“We are preparing for India’s first C-17 to enter flight test on schedule early next year,” he added.

## India, Thailand push for trilateral highway

**INDIA AND** Thailand reviewed the progress in their negotiations for a free trade treaty and decided to step up work on land-mark connectivity projects like a trilateral highway that will link the two countries through Myanmar.

The Indian side led by Sanjay Singh, Secretary (East) in the External Affairs Ministry, held talks with the Thai delegation, led by Sihasak Phuanketkeow, Permanent Secretary, Thailand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Bangkok on August 10.

The foreign office consultations took stock of ongoing measures to enhance connectivity and boost infrastructure, a key priority, through implementation of projects such as Thailand-Myanmar-India Trilateral Highway and Dawei, said the Indian Embassy in Bangkok in a statement made available here.

“They also discussed the current status of negotiations on the comprehensive bilateral FTA, cooperation to enhance business ties, security issues, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges,” the Indian Embassy said.

The talks reviewed a slew of initiatives sealed between the two sides during the landmark visit of Thailand Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra to India earlier this year. Her visit had set the stage for forging a strate-



gic partnership between the two countries.

The Indian side briefed Thai diplomats on New Delhi’s preparations for hosting a special India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in December.

In a special gesture signalling an upward swing in New Delhi’s Look East policy, India had hosted Thailand’s first female and youngest Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra as the Guest of Honour at the Republic Day function in January this year. This was

the third consecutive year in which India had invited a leader from a Southeast Asian country as its chief guest at the Republic Day parade, a unique honour accorded to special friends of India with which New Delhi wishes to accelerate its diplomatic and economic ties.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak were respective chief guests at the 2011 and 2010 Republic Day parades.

## India to boost ties with Belarus in IT

**INDIAN COMPANIES** are willing to step up cooperation with Belarusian partners in the IT industry, said India’s Ambassador Manoj Bharti.

Some Indian companies see Belarus as an outsourcing territory for their software developments which they plan to sell to Europe, Bharti said.



The Indian Embassy expects an increase in the number of offices of Indian IT-companies in Belarus.

He stressed that the Indian companies which came to Belarus were impressed by the level of training of Belarusian IT specialists. “They appreciate it and they are sure Belarus is the right choice for joint partnerships,” Bharti added.

Belarusian-Indian training centre in Minsk was opened in 2011. It specialises in professional improvement of IT-specialists and professors from technical universities. More than 2,000 specialists have already undergone training there.

The centre has hired leading teachers from Belarus, India and other countries, specialists of major IT companies, educational and research centres. The training programme is based on most relevant global trends.

## Indian wins Ramon Magasaysay Award

**INDIA’S KULANDEI** Francis is one of the six winners of the Ramon Magasaysay Award for 2012, it was announced by the organisers in Manila recently. Francis has been recognised for his visionary zeal, his profound faith in community energies and his sustained programmes in pursuing the holistic economic empowerment of thousands of women and their families in rural India, the Ramon Magasaysay Award Foundation (RMAF) said in a statement.

Francis began the Integrated Village Development Project (IVDP) in 1979, in Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu, starting out with small projects like conducting a night school and setting up a first-aid centre.







# ADVANTAGE OIFC: STAY CONNECTED!

Since its inception in 2007, the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre is touching the lives of thousands of overseas Indians, writes **N.C. Bipindra**

**T**here are over 25 million Indians overseas and this overseas community acts as a rich source of knowledge, expertise, resources and markets for the development of the country of origin. With this as the inspiration, the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) came into existence in 2007 and in the last five years it has touched the lives of several thousands of them. By being there, OIFC has ensured easier processes for those Indians overseas who want to engage with India.

Consider these: The OIFC has answered nearly 10,000 queries from overseas Indians who wanted to invest in India and wanted to know how to go about it.

It has over 13,000 Indians overseas who have registered with it to stay connected for mutual benefit in the field of business.

It has at least 35,000 subscribers to its monthly newsletter called 'IndiaConnect' to catch the trends in the latest India investment story. And its a popular link on all social networking sites, be it Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

A public-private partnership initiative of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), an apex industry chamber, OIFC functions with the objective of helping overseas Indians to expand their economic engagement with India.

The OIFC was an idea that was born out of the concerns from overseas Indians over information scarcity on investment environment in India and demands for a reliable facilitator of business partnerships.

According to an Ernst & Young report, India is the second most preferred destination for foreign investors. Among the attractions in India, according to the report, are its aerospace and defence industry, which is an emerging market, automotive industry, a profitable sector, apart from health care and pharmaceuticals, which have shown tremendous growth potential.

"In their quest to invest in India, the overseas Indians sometimes face hurdles. They have questions but no answers. They have doubts but don't know who to contact to clear them. They want to take the next step but can't because of lack of clarity as well as accessibility to the right people and credible information. Here is where OIFC comes



(Left) Hon'ble Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, Shri Vayalar Ravi, inaugurating the OIFC Market Place at PBD 2012, along with Shri Ashok Gehlot, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Rajasthan; and Mr. Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII and Co-Chairman, OIFC.

in to fill the gap," an OIFC official said.

It is a non-profit initiative that aims to expand the Indian Diaspora's involvement in their homeland's growth story.

The mandate of the centre, with its headquarters in the satellite town of Gurgaon in Haryana, is to establish and maintain a Diaspora Knowledge Network and to promote overseas Indian investments into India and facilitate business partnerships. It also assists states to project investment opportunities to overseas Indians and provides a host of advisory services to Persons of Indian origin (PIOs) and non-resident Indians (NRIs).

Among the services it provides to overseas Indians wanting to invest in India are a business networking platform, a live chat window that is operational 16 hours and five days a week on its website [www.oifc.in](http://www.oifc.in), along with an 'Ask the Expert' service. OIFC is also responsible for providing interactive investment toolkits and informing discerning Indians overseas about investment opportunities in the Indian states.

The states that have tied up with OIFC are Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, Punjab and Rajasthan. To ensure the discerning investor receives the right kind of guidance, OIFC has also tied up with banks such as Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd.

Delegates attending the OIFC 'Diaspora Engagement Meet' in Kenya in April 2012.



(Above) Hon. Amb. Prof. Samson K. Onger, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Govt. of Republic of Kenya, speaking at the OIFC 'Diaspora Engagement Meet', held in April 2012; (Left) Ms. Sujata Sudarshan, CEO, OIFC, addressing at the OIFC Business Session in The Netherlands.

like you to reach out and invest in a new India. Invest, not just financially, but intellectually, socially, culturally and, above all, emotionally."

Commenting on the OIFC, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India said, "It could be an effective instrument to liaise with members of the Indian diaspora on matters related to investment in India."

The Hon'ble Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Shri Vayalar Ravi has noted that the objectives of OIFC "will be to bring the Indian states, Indian business and potential overseas investors on the same platform and to facilitate the investors to identify investment opportunities."

To achieve these objectives, the OIFC has established contacts with several thousands of overseas Indians through various road shows and business forums held in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, Middle East, North America and the United Kingdom, apart from India.

In April 2012, the OIFC held an 'Indian Diaspora Engagement Meet' in Nairobi, Kenya, for overseas Indians of East African nations.

The MOIA Secretary, Shri Parvez Dewan, who is also the chairman of the OIFC, was present at this meet organised in association with the Indian High Commission in Kenya and supported by Global Organisation for People of Indian Origin (GOPIO), Africa.

The OIFC model is being studied by countries such as Vietnam, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Jamaica to act as a template for their own diaspora investors. ☺





# FOCUS MIGRATION

MOIA and the European Union move towards establishing a futuristic framework for cooperation on migration and mobility

**C**onscious of the adverse impact of erratic migration and mobility of workers, India and the 27-nation European Union are hastening the process of establishing a framework to deal with issues thrown up by the movement of skilled and unskilled labour force.

In this regard, the two sides held a day-long high-level dialogue in New Delhi on July 2 this year when they listed out the broad contours of the futuristic framework for cooperation on migration and mobility.

The European Union side was led by European Commission Director General for Home Affairs Stefano Manservigi and it included representatives from the Presidency of the European Union, member-states and a delegation, apart from European External Action Service.

The Indian side was led by Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) Secretary Parvez Dewan and it included representatives from the MOIA including Joint Secretary Financial Services Atul Kumar Tiwari, Min-



(Top) The MOIA-European Commission meeting being held in New Delhi on July 2;  
(Above) European Commission Director General for Home Affairs Stefano Manservigi.

istry of External Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs and the India Centre for Migration.

Following their deliberations on various subjects during the high-level dialogue, the

two sides agreed that there were several areas of common interest for further cooperation on migration and mobility between India and the European Union.

Both sides acknowledged that actions could comprehensively cover four priority areas — safe and legal migration, combating irregular migration, migration and development, and sharing information and best practices. They wanted safe and legal migration for which they decided that evidence-based research could be carried out jointly.

That apart, the two sides preferred pre-departure orientation for migrant workers ahead of flying out to engage in gainful employment overseas.

The primary concern of a host nation with regard to migrant workers is lack of necessary skills that could help them land a job and earn a living in foreign land.

For the purpose, the Indian and European Union sides noted that appropriate skill development actions in the fields where they are looking for overseas employment would be of help.

Among the areas suggested at the high-level dialogue included information technology and health care sectors, where there was a lot of scope for migrant workers to land jobs.

To ensure that migration and mobility take place on legal terms and the interest of the migrant workers is best served, the two sides also decided that they could work on visa policies that would enable secure overseas employment.

To combat irregular migration, India and the European Union decided that they need to carry out an evidence-based research to find means of regulating the process of workers mobility and keeping a tab on trends. The two sides decided to enhance capacities of both their governmental agencies as also the migrant work force through training.

They also agreed on sharing and comparing data, based, for instance, on Eurostat, a directorate-general of the European Commission with the responsibility of providing statistical data on European Union nations, or on Frontex, an agency responsible for managing borders within the European Union and movement of people, or on national government data.

This sharing of information and comparing data would help in better-informed policy formulations and interventions with regard to migration and mobility of workers. The two sides also stressed the importance of sharing information and best practices regarding speedy verification of nationality with a view to return of irregular migrants and possible cooperation.

Another key area of discussion and convergence between India and the European Union was on migration and development under which they wanted to improve their knowledge base through an extended migration profile. This, they felt, would improve remittances by workers overseas and in circular migrations, apart from regulating mobility of scientists and technologists to foster innovation.

A major issue of concern was protection of victims, and in this regard the two sides agreed to share information and practices regarding international protection for those migrant workers in need.

“These initiatives could constitute building blocks of the future framework of India-European Union cooperation on migration and mobility,” the meeting concluded.



“This cooperation should be comprehensive in its approach, and should be consolidated in the near future,” the two sides concurred.

At the dialogue, India and European Union officials also discussed framing of a common agenda on migration and mobility as an option. “Further work will be done by both sides to explore the feasibility, scope and the added value of any future framework,” they decided.

As next steps and modalities to take forward the proposed collaboration, it was agreed at the meeting that before their next high-level dialogue in the first half of 2013, a decision would be taken to develop such cooperation between India and the European Union, as part of the Global Ap-

The MOIA-European Commission dialogue in progress in New Delhi on July 2.

proach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM).

Both sides also agreed that they would in the forthcoming period consider appropriate steps to take forward the framework as discussed during the high-level dialogue and set forth in these joint conclusions through regular contacts at the working level conducted locally in India and in the European Union.

“A joint India-European Union working group may be set up for this purpose,” the two sides averred.

The high-level dialogue was conducted in a spirit of free and frank discussions and cooperation, emphasising mutual benefits and challenges.

Forces of globalisation and the dynamics of capitalist development are also driving migration — apart from demographic changes these days when internationalisation of labour mobility is the norm.

Though figures on the Indian share of foreign-born proportion of the work force in some western European nations is unavailable, the total figure is about 10 percent, according to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) data for 2011.

In particular, the OECD figures are 19 percent for Ireland and over 45 percent for Luxembourg.

With migrant workers facing odds in general, studies have shown that they have a higher rate of unemployment than natives in European Union and OECD nations. ☛

Both sides agreed that actions could cover four priority areas - safe and legal migration, combating irregular migration, migration and development, and sharing information and best practices



# Gulf Links

The nearly six million-strong Indian workforce in six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is playing a pivotal role in the development of the region; the relationship is only poised to grow, write **Gyanendra Kumar Keshri** and **Aroonim Bhuyan**

Relations between India and the Gulf region date back to the ancient times. Over the ages, they have only grown and never showed any signs of subsiding. These ties, be they diplomatic, economic or people-to-people, between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — are today on a very strong footing and are only poised to grow, a cross section of the people told *Pravasi Bharatiya*.

Today, the Indian expatriate population in the six GCC countries number close to six million — 5.94 million to be precise — and a huge chunk of them are Malayalees from Kerala, according to information available in the Indian ministries of Overseas Indian Affairs and External Affairs.

Trade links between India and the Gulf region can be traced back to the earliest civilisations, dating back to over 5,000

years. The Arabs were skilled seafarers and used to traverse the oceans trading in goods like gold, jade and herbs.

“The Gulf region, like South-East and South Asia, is part of our natural economic hinterland. We must pursue closer economic relations with all our neighbours in our wider Asian neighbourhood,” Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told a recent meeting of the Trade and Economic Relations Committee between India and the GCC countries.

“India has successfully pursued a ‘Look East’ policy to come closer to the countries of South-East Asia. We must, similarly, come closer to our western neighbours in the Gulf,” he said.

Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi, who attaches immense importance to the welfare of expatriate Indian community in the Gulf region, lauded the role the Indians have played, not just in nation-building of the countries of their

domicile, but also in their contribution to India’s growth, progress and welfare. He has visited each of the six GCC countries to forge personal bonds.

“Our ties with Gulf countries have been reciprocal — both have gained a lot. Indians went there from Kerala, or what was Travancore, and other places in the early days. There are workers and also professionals there — doctors, teachers, IT experts, banking people. These countries benefited a lot from them. That is why their contribution is widely recognised,” the Minister told *Pravasi Bharatiya*.

“Now, in return, they are sending billions of dollars back home, setting up schools, opening hospitals, doing welfare work,” the Minister added, referring to the remittances from the Indian community in the six GCC countries, which account for

The famous Dubai Creek, the main disembarkation at Bur Dubai and a favourite hangout with Indians.

Our Indian community has been living and working in the Gulf as though it is their own land. They are the most law-abiding people there. This shows the adaptability, the greatness of our people towards the countries where they live.

— Shri Vayalar Ravi, Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs







Ambassador of India to Kuwait, H.E. Satish C. Mehta, celebrating the 66th Independence Day with the community at the Indian Embassy.

## NRIs in the 6 GCC countries



a large chunk of such transfers that topped \$66 billion last year — the highest for any country.

“That is not all, our Indian community has also been living and working in Gulf countries as though it is their own land. They are the most law-abiding people there. No trouble at all. This also shows the adaptability, the greatness of our people. The feeling they have towards the countries where they live — peaceful and law-abiding. That is why they have also been accepted and appreciated,” Minister Ravi said.

“Another interesting aspect of the Indian community in the region is that unlike other places, almost every Indian living here holds an Indian passport. They wanted a sense from us that they continue to belong to India. They wanted voting rights. I am very happy that it has been given. The Representation of the People Act has been amended for them. They are having their names listed on the electoral rolls in India and they can vote,” he added.

### LOOKING BACK, PATH AHEAD

India’s ties with the region date back to more than two millennia when Arab seafarers discovered the secrets of the mon-

soon winds and used that in navigation to push trade.

Large ships from the region had extensive trade with the kingdoms of the Pandyas, Cholas and Cheras — in what is present-day Kerala and Tamil Nadu — that even date back to 500 BC.

The Arabs also depended heavily on boats built at Beypore in Kerala, which still has a shipbuilding industry that dates back more than 1,500 years. The dhows or *urus*, as the boats are called in Malayalam, were preferred by the Arabs as they liked the Kerala teak that was used to make them (*See box*). This movement of people between the two regions also led to the introduction of Islam in Kerala.

Coming to modern times, links between the Gulf region and India continued during the colonial era. In fact, British interests in the Gulf were protected by the Bombay Marine. Even the principal currency of the Gulf region between 1890 and 1966 was the Indian rupee. For example, prior to today’s dirham in the UAE, the riyal was the currency in that

## BEYPORE’S URU CONNECTION

Beypore, near Kozhikode, is a port of trade and a maritime centre which has been frequented by the Arab, Chinese, and European merchants for centuries. It is home to a 1,500-year-old tradition of shipbuilding, especially the *dhow* or *uru*. These ships are also called *paikappal* or sailing ships by the local population.

The Beypore port has always been a major outlet for timber from Kerala. Many seafaring people, especially the Arabs, preferred teak from the Kerala forests for building boats. Consequently a boatbuilding industry gradually developed around Beypore. The business thrived until World War I, after which more modern vessels became popular. However, recent times have seen a revival in the building of wooden cabin cruisers and pleasure boats, all of which are mainly exported. Many Arabs buy *urus* from exclusive merchants in Beypore even today. These boats are distinguished by the fact that they are built entirely of wood and made using only hand tools. Machines are not used even for the cutting of the timber — sawing, shaving and shaping are all done by hand.

*Urus* are usually a product of teams of more than fifty men, including carpenters, blacksmiths, caulkers and painters, working under makeshift tents on each vessel. Most of the boats built here have a working life of seventy-five years and building a boat can take anything from six months to two years depending on the tonnage.

A unique feature of building *urus* is that the craft has been passed on from generation to generation through apprenticeship and experience. The foreman or master craftsman is a walking encyclopedia on the art of boatbuilding and has at his fingertips the knowledge of all required calculations.

These are remembered and handed down to each generation in the form of verses. The boats, regardless of their size, are made without any charts or drawings. It is said that once the ships are built, the foreman can draw a waterline with his hands and when the vessel enters the water, it will sit exactly on this waterline.

An ancient Dhow.  
(Photo: Courtesy, India and the UAE: In Celebration of a Legendary Friendship)



country — that is, after the Gulf rupee.

K.V. Shamshudeen, who runs the Gulf-based Barjeel Geojit Securities LLC, a financial services company, is one among those Indians who were witness to this gradual transition, having landed in the UAE in 1970s. “I remember that 50 fils (100 fils made a UAE riyal) was called *aathanna*, just like we used to call 50 *paisa aathanna* (or eight annas),” he said.

Shamshudeen, who also runs the

Pravasi Bandhu Welfare Trust, said when he arrived in the Gulf, he met Indians who had been already there for a long time. “I met Indian doctors who had been there for over 15 years. Sindhi businessmen had been there for over 60 years and, you should note, they all rose through hard work, starting without a penny in hand.”

Yet, it was in the 1970s, when the Gulf oil boom happened, that a large number of Indians started migrating to that region



looking for better opportunities. “With refineries coming up in Jeddah, Dammam and Jubail, a large number of Indians started moving to Saudi Arabia in the 1970s,” said Syed Zia ur Rahman, chief executive of the Riyadh-based Mawiyah Medical Group, who also runs a popular website serving the Indian diaspora in the Gulf.

In fact, this trend was noticed across the region. Akbar Ali, who is in the aluminum and glass cladding business in Dubai and came to the UAE from Kannur in Kerala in 1976, corroborates this. “There were a whole lot of Indians who came then and a lot of them were Malayalees.”

After the oil boom, came the construction boom. With oil changing the economy of the region, it was but only natural that the Gulf countries embarked on fast-paced infrastructure development in the late 1980s and 1990s. This saw a surge in migration of blue-collar workers from India to the Gulf.

Indian blue-collar workers became ubiquitous across all the six GCC countries. However, over the last decade, the profile of Indians migrating to the Gulf is changing once again.

“GCC economies are planning for the next diversification from hydrocarbon to non-hydrocarbon sectors. This will increase job opportunities in the areas of construction, hospitality and banking. Traditionally, the hydrocarbon sector had given scope for many technical personnel such as engineers and accountants. Such industries will also continue to provide scope for these skilled people,” said R. Seetharaman, CEO, Doha Bank Group.

“There is a sizeable number of doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, bankers, managers and other professionals who have played a vital role in GCC economies and will continue to do so. The telecom industry also will continue to provide opportunities for skilled workers from India,” Dr. Seetharaman adds.

There is heavy demand in the health care sector too. In Saudi Arabia alone, the largest of the GCC countries, many new healthcare projects are coming up. There is an increasing demand for Indian doctors and nurses in all the six nations. In fact, Indian nurses top the priority lists of both government and private hospitals. Today, the nearly six million-strong Indian work force plays a pivotal role in the develop-



ment of the GCC countries. “India and the Gulf region are complementing each other. GCC countries need Indians for their development, while India is dependent on the Gulf region for energy. A major portion of remittances to India comes from GCC countries,” said Ram Buxani, president of Cosmos-ITL Group, one of the oldest Indian-run business houses in the region.

On specific numbers, Indians are the largest expatriate community in the Gulf region. The largest is in Saudi Arabia, numbering around two million. This is followed by 1.75 million in the UAE, 720,000 in Oman, 640,000 in Kuwait, 500,000 in Qatar, and 350,000 in Bahrain.

#### BAHRAIN

Bahrain is small country in the region both geographically, with 712 sq. km of area, and in terms of population — 1.2 million people. But it has been among the favourite destinations for Indian nationals working as expatriates. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the number of Indian nationals has increased over the years, estimated currently at around 350,000. Out of this, 220,000 are from Kerala, while Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu account for around 40,000 each. The remaining

Today, the nearly  
six-million-strong  
Indian work force  
plays a pivotal role in  
the development of  
the GCC countries

(Above) Samples of Indian currency that were once legal tender in the UAE, on display at the Emirates NBD Pearl Museum.

(Photo: Courtesy, India and the UAE: In Celebration of a Legendary Friendship)

50,000 are from Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab and other Indian states. The relations with Bahrain were reinforced when Minister Vayalar Ravi paid a visit to the country from November 14-16, 2011.

#### KUWAIT

Kuwait has an estimated area of 17,820 sq km with a population of 3.6 million. The Indian community there has strength of around 641,000, adding an important dimension to ties between the two countries. Indians are also the largest expatriate community in Kuwait and have a presence in practically all segments of the society. The total remittances from Kuwait, according to the Ministry of External Affairs, are also significant at around \$4 billion annually. Until 1961, the Indian rupee was the legal tender in Kuwait. Till the discovery of oil, Kuwait's economy revolved around its fine harbour and maritime activities which included shipbuilding, pearl diving, fishing and voyages to India on dhows carrying dates that were traded for wood, cereals, clothes and spices.

#### OMAN

Oman, with an area of 309,501 sq km and a total 2.77 million people, is home to an estimated 718,000-plus Indians, who also constitute the largest expatriate community of the country. Thousands of Indian nationals work as doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, teachers, lecturers, nurses and managers. In fact, there are an estimated 2,000 Indian doctors who work in Oman at Government hospitals and in clinics in the private sector. Both countries

enjoy warm and cordial relations, which can be ascribed to historical maritime trade linkages, intimacy of the royal family with India and the seminal role of the Indian expatriate community in the building of Oman, which is acknowledged by the Omani Government, according to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs. Minister Ravi visited Muscat from March 6-8, this year. Earlier, he had been to Muscat in June 2009.

#### QATAR

Qatar is also a relatively small country with an area of 11,437 sq km and a population of around 1.85 million people. But there, too, the Indian community has a strong presence, with an estimated 50,000 people. Their remittances to India is also estimated at over \$1 billion annually. Qatar is also a very important source of hydrocarbons for India, with a long-term contract for 7.5 million tonnes of liquefied natural gas every year, apart from spot purchases. Major items of Indian exports to Qatar are machinery and equipment, transport equipment, textiles, food products, ores and minerals.

India, in fact, is the fourth-largest export market for Qatar after Japan, South Korea and Singapore. In terms of Qatari imports, India ranks 10th. Minister Ravi visited Qatar from March 1-3 this year. His earlier visits were in March 2006 and April 2007.

#### SAUDI ARABIA

By contrast, Saudi Arabia is the largest Arab state by area, covering 2,250,000 sq km and a population of 28.37 million. According to Ministry of External Affairs, the two-million-strong Indian community in Saudi Arabia constitutes the largest expatriate group in the Kingdom and is the “most preferred” due to its expertise, sense of discipline, law abiding and peace loving nature. The Saudi leadership has appreciated the contribution made by the Indian community to the development of Saudi Arabia. The Hajj is another important component of bilateral relations, with more than 1,70,000 Indians undertaking the pilgrimage every year — the third-largest contingent to the Kingdom. On economic ties, Saudi Arabia is India's fourth largest trade partner worth \$25 billion and largest supplier of crude oil. Minister Ravi visited Riyadh in September 2010.

#### UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

A federation of seven emirates — Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Quwain — The United Arab Emirates spans some 83,6001 sq km and has a population of around 8.26 million people. Here, too, there is a large Indian expatriate community, estimated at 1.75 million. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, professionally qualified people constitute about

20 percent of the community, followed by 20 percent in white-collar jobs and the remaining 60 comprising blue-collar workers. India is the largest trading partner for UAE, which is the fifth-largest source of crude oil for India. People-to-people links between India and the UAE can also be gauged by the fact that there are as many as 500 flights a week between various destinations in the two countries. Minister Ravi visited UAE in April this year.

#### PEOPLE MATTER

Indians, it is widely accepted, are among the most preferred community in the Gulf region not only due to their expertise, but also because of their sense of discipline, and their law abiding and peace loving nature. “Indian workers are given top priority. They are quiet performers and generally do not involve in local politics. Their efficiency and quality has been admired and commended by local authorities at several forums,” said Buxani. “Percentage-wise, offences committed by Indians are the lowest,” he added.

In the past decade, there has also been a significant shift in the category of Indian workers migrating to Gulf region. Now, an increasingly-large number of skilled or white-collar workers are moving to that region.

“Many Gulf countries have completed the first phase of infrastructure development which needed a lot of manual labour. Now, they are also focusing on knowledge-based industries. This increases the job prospects of white-collar workers in the Gulf region,” said Kurian Kuriakose, chairman of the Doha-based Morison Menon Chartered Accountants.

Kuriakose said another change in the pattern of Indian workers migrating to Gulf countries is the geographical spread. “Now there are more number of people from the north, north west and west of India coming to Gulf countries, compared to those from south India,” he said.

“With the large number of knowledgeable, hardworking and young population, India is perhaps the only country in the world which can supply the quantity and quality of manpower the Gulf needs for its fast-paced development. The Gulf region is culturally more familiar with the Indian workers than the Chinese or the Filipino work force.”



(Clockwise from top), Minister Vayalar Ravi at Gulf Medical University; with Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the then Minister of Social Affairs and Labour of Kuwait in 2007; at a Bahrain event; and with the then Acting Governor of Riyadh Prince Sat-tam Bin Abdulaziz. The then Ambassador of India in Saudi Arabia, Talmiz Ahmed is seen at left.



## Richest Indians in the Gulf



**Micky Jagtiani**  
Head, Landmark Group  
Fortune: \$3.2 bn



**Yusuffali MA**  
Managing Director,  
EMKE Group  
Fortune: \$1.75bn



**BR Shetty**  
CEO, New Medical  
Center (NMC) Group  
Fortune: \$1.72bn



**Chhabria family**  
Partners, Jumbo  
Electronics  
Fortune: \$1.3bn



**PNC Menon**  
Head, Sobha  
Developers  
Fortune: \$1.2bn



**Sunny Varkey**  
Founder, GEMS  
Education  
Fortune: \$950m



**Rajen Kilachand**  
Chairman, Dodsai  
Group  
Fortune: \$900m



**Tony Jashanmal**  
Executive Director,  
Jashanmal Group  
Fortune: \$900m



**LT Pagarani**  
Chairman, Choitram  
and Sons  
Fortune: \$820m



**Dr. Mohammed Ali**  
Founder, Galfar Engi-  
neering and Contracting  
Fortune: \$725m



**Paras Shahdarpuri**  
Chairman, Nikai Group  
Fortune: \$650m



**Hitesh Bodani**  
Chairman, Bond Invest-  
ment Group Holdings  
Fortune: \$630m



**Yogesh Mehta**  
MD, Petrochem  
Middle East  
Fortune: \$623m



**Jayant Ganwani**  
CEO, Lal's Group  
Fortune: \$530m



**Nilesh Ved**  
Founder, Apparel  
Group  
Fortune: \$480m



**Khimji family**  
Founder, Khimji  
Ramdas LLC  
Fortune: \$390m



**Santosh Joseph**  
President, Dubai Pearl  
Fortune: \$360m



**Faizal Kottikollon**  
CEO, KEF Holding  
Fortune: \$300m



**Mohan Valrani**  
Vice-Chairman, Al Shirawi  
Group of Companies  
Fortune: \$285m



**CK Menon**  
Chairman, Behzad  
Group  
Fortune: \$250m



**Ram Buxani**  
Chairman, Cosmos-ITL  
Group  
Fortune: \$235m



**Joy Alukkas**  
MD, Joyalukkas Group  
Fortune: \$230m



**Rizwan Sajani**  
Chairman, Danube  
Building Materials  
Fortune: \$230m



**Vasu Shroff**  
Chairman, Regal Group  
Fortune: \$220m



**Azad Moopen**  
Chairman, DM Group  
Fortune: \$215m



**Ajay Bhatia**  
Chairman, Bhatia  
Group  
Fortune: \$205m



**Ramesh Ramakrishnan**  
Chairman, Transworld  
Fortune: \$205m



**GB Choithram Jethwani**  
Chairman, Geebee  
Trading  
Fortune: \$190m



**S Kumar Wadhawan**  
CEO, Samara Group  
Fortune: \$180m



**Maghanmal Pancholia**  
Chairman, Arabian  
Trading Agency  
Fortune: \$170m

Source: Indian Rich List 2011, [www.arabianbusiness.com](http://www.arabianbusiness.com)



Indian stamps that were in circulation in the UAE.

### BOOMING TRADE TIES

On the back of strong people-to-people contacts, cordial political relations and geographical proximity, India has emerged as the second-largest trading partner of the GCC countries, only slightly behind Japan. GCC countries' trade with India has risen from barely 2 percent in 2001 to 11 percent in 2010, according to the International Monetary Fund data. India-GCC bilateral trade was \$119 billion in 2010-11. It included \$44 billion of India's export to GCC.

India is now the top exporter to the Gulf countries, while it is also the second-largest importer of Gulf products after Japan. GCC's combined imports of goods stood at nearly \$350 billion in 2010, of which India supplied almost 12 percent.

Almost 11 percent of total GCC exports go to India. With a share of 15.6 percent, Japan is the largest user of GCC products.

India-GCC trade relations are set to further strengthen in the coming years, with a sharp increase in demand for fossil fuels in India, which is heavily dependent on Gulf oil and gas to meet its energy security needs. The six GCC countries control more than 45 percent of the world's recoverable oil and 20 percent of gas resources. Nearly 40 percent of India's crude oil import is met from GCC countries. Gulf countries are also cash-rich. Although there is no official figure, private estimates put the size of GCC sovereign wealth funds at around \$2 trillion. Massive trade surplus resulting from the surge in hydrocarbon exports has led to the accumulation of huge cash in the GCC.

Gulf countries had a combined trade surplus of \$520 billion in 2011.

Gulf-based sovereign wealth funds have made some high-profile investments in the United States and Europe. However, due to disappointing returns from the investments in western countries, most of the Gulf funds are now exploring investment opportunities in India and other Asian countries. "India and Gulf countries are traditional trading partners. In the changing world economic order, this partnership is set to further strengthen," said M.J. Mohamed Iqbal, managing director of the Middle East unit of Toshiba Elevators that has a presence across the region.

He said Indian and Gulf economies complement each other. India needs energy to fuel its expanding economy. The Gulf countries have abundant oil and gas resources to meet India's growth demands. On the other hand, Gulf countries need a skilled work force and knowhow to sustain their economic growth. India is the biggest supplier of human resources to the Gulf and is now emerging as an important supplier of knowhow.

India and the GCC have also been negotiating a free trade pact for the past seven years. The two sides signed a framework agreement in August 2004 for enhancing and developing economic cooperation and signing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Once it becomes operational, it is expected to remove several tariff and non-tariff barriers and help further boost two-way trade.

## Gulf Indians top source of remittances

India is the largest recipient of remittances globally, notably from the Gulf. According to the World Bank, officially-recorded remittances to India in 2011 was \$58 billion, followed by China with \$57 billion. With nearly six-million population, the Indian diaspora in the Gulf are now the biggest source of remittances to India. In 2008, Gulf replaced North America as the top source of remittances to India. Indian community working in the six GCC countries now contribute almost one of third of the total remittances to India.

According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) estimates, the Gulf region accounted for an average 27 percent of



H.E. Mr. Hamid Ali Rao, Indian Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, watches the tricolour being unfurled at the Indian Embassy, Riyadh.

the total remittance inflows to India between 2006-07 to 2009-10.

In the year of global economic crisis in 2008-09, Gulf countries accounted for nearly 31 percent of the total remittance inflows to India. In 2011-12, India's trade deficit increased to nearly \$170 billion. However, remittances from overseas has been an important source of foreign currency in India and can help in addressing the balance of payment issue.





# DIASPORA'S DATE WITH MAURITIUS

The Indian Ocean nation is set to organise the 6th Mini Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas in October

After showcasing the country's colourful tradition and impressive diaspora in New York, Singapore, The Hague, Durban and Toronto, India is now taking the Mini Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas to the gem of the Indian Ocean.

The sixth edition of the Mini PBD will be held in Mauritius on October 27-28, 2012, it was announced at a press meet addressed by Shri Mookhesswur Choonee, Minister of Arts and Culture, Government of Mauritius, on July 31.

While emphasising that the Mauritian government will provide full support and participation in the Mini PBD, Choonee said that the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) in Moka will be the venue for the event.

He also revealed that representatives from France, Great Britain, South Africa, and Aus-

tralia, among others, have already confirmed their participation at the convention.

"The Mini Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will witness mass participation from the Mauritian government. Mauritius will act as a hub for the African and European markets as well as attract the French-speaking and Commonwealth countries," Choonee said.

"Several countries have confirmed their participation. We are expecting about 50 representatives from Réunion, Holland, Australia, Great Britain, France and South Africa," he added.

The announcement was reiterated by Shri Parvez Dewan, Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, at a media briefing in the High Commission of India in Port Louis on August 8. Dewan, who was on a two-day visit to the island nation, also visited the MGI in Moka.



The convention's inaugural event will be held at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre.

During his visit, Dewan met His Excellency Shri T.P. Seetharam, High Commissioner of India to Mauritius, in Port Louis. He also held dialogues with Mookhesswur Choonee and H.E Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, Na-

tional Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, Government of Mauritius.

India's connection with Mauritius dates back to the 1820s when Indian workers started migrating to Mauritius to work on sugar plantations.

Meanwhile, the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC), in association with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) and Indian High Commission, Mauritius, will organise the OIFC Diaspora Engagement Meet on October 26, 2012, as a pre-PBD event. This meet is aimed at providing a platform to Indian Diaspora to interact with the Indian Industry delegation.

Through this platform, OIFC will showcase its services to the diaspora to facilitate engagement to the visiting Indian Industry business delegation from ASSOCHAM-CII-FICCI.

# Republican stalwart

Florida-based Dr. Akshay Desai secures a place in Mitt Romney's Asian American panel

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney has named the party's top Indian-American fundraiser, Dr. Akshay Desai, one of seven national co-chairs of his newly-formed Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders for Romney committee.

Desai, CEO of St. Petersburg, Florida-based Universal Health Care Group Inc., is the only South Asian American among the seven co-chairs of the panel headed by former Labour Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

A former appointee of President George W. Bush to the White House Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, where he served from 2005-2008 and chaired the commission's



health committee, Desai was appointed to chair the Republican Party of Florida's finance committee in February.

He also serves on the national Republican finance committee.

Desai recently told *India-West*, an ethnic publication, that Romney "deeply under-

stands the U.S.-India partnership and the need to nurture that relationship".

Desai is the CEO of Florida-based Universal Health Care Group Inc.

Romney "is very supportive of legal immigration", said Desai, who has discussed with the Republican nominee issues

concerning "physicians, hotel and motel owners and convenience store owners" in the Indian-American community.

Desai founded Universal Health Care and American Managed Care LLC, both in 2002. From 1999-2000, he was chief of staff and chairman of the board of trustees for Northside Hospital and Heart Clinic and St. Petersburg General Hospital in St. Petersburg.

From 1989-2000, Desai was president of American Family and Geriatrics Care in Pennsylvania. He was awarded the 'Ellis Island Medal of Honour' in 2007.

Desai has a medical degree from India and a Master's in public health administrative medicine from George Washington University.

# Indian-Americans get key spots in US President conventions

With both the Democratic and Republican parties out to woo the three million strong Indian-American community with its growing political clout, three of them were given prime spots at the two parties' presidential conventions.

While California's Indian-American Attorney General Kamala Harris won a prime speaking role at the Democratic National Convention in North Carolina, Louisiana

governor Bobby Jindal and South Carolina governor Nikki Haley were among the "headliners" at the Republican National Convention at Tampa, Florida.

Apart from a speaking slot at the Democratic convention that would endorse President Barack Obama's run for a second term, Harris is also a co-chair of the Rules Committee of the party.

Jindal, who has been stumping for the Republican



Bobby Jindal (left) and Kamala Harris.



nominee Mitt Romney and his running mate Paul Ryan, said in a statement prior to the convention: "I look forward to talking about the important choice facing our

nation. We can either go the way of Europe, grow the public sector and make Americans more dependent on government or we can get behind Mitt Romney, reinvigorate the private sector and get our people back to work."



# NATURAL BYPASS

Dr. Mukesh Hariawala to receive 'India's Most Admired Surgeon 2012' award for his work on 'triple heart therapy' — a low-cost cardiac technology to help diabetic patients

**D**r. Mukesh Hariawala, an award winning Indian-American artificial heart surgeon, is set to introduce a unique low-cost 'triple heart therapy' in India to help patients with diabetes who cannot afford expensive bypass operations.

The Harvard-trained, Boston-based surgeon will receive 'India's Most Admired Surgeon 2012' award for pioneering work on angiogenesis or growth of new blood vessels to aid healing, at the 'Pharmaceutical Leadership Summit', organised by healthcare magazine *Pharmaleaders*, in Mumbai on September 21. "I am pleased that the cutting-edge Angiogenesis Therapy will help poor patients with heart disease in my motherland India and rest of the world, thus reducing the global economic burden of healthcare," Hariawala told *IANS*.

"Hariawala is the first NRI surgeon to be honoured with this prestigious award for pioneering work on Angiogenesis

that will revolutionise treatment of heart disease globally and save millions of lives," said award committee chairman Satya Brahma, editor-in-chief of *Pharmaleaders* magazine.

Hariawala, who has done pioneering work in Angiogenesis research at Harvard in Boston, said 'Triple Heart Therapy' involves spontaneous development of new blood vessels in the heart by laser stimulation and subsequent injection of patient's own stem cells harvested from bone marrow.

This "would be the future treatment of heart disease which is expected to save millions of lives worldwide," said Hariawala, calling it "a

natural bypass to bypass surgery."

"I want to see a vibrant and aggressive government policy where India's monetary resources are better utilised towards rural development and raising the standards of living for all Indians," he said.

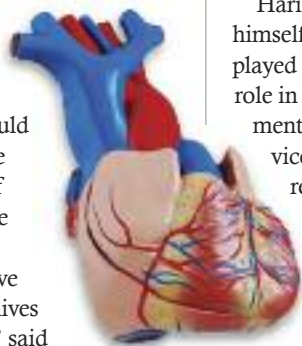
Hariawala also plans to bring to India next year the artificial Titanium Heart or Ventricular Assist Device (VAD) implant that can play the role of a supplementary heart.

Hariawala, who himself has not played any research role in the development of this device and is only responsible for taking the technology to

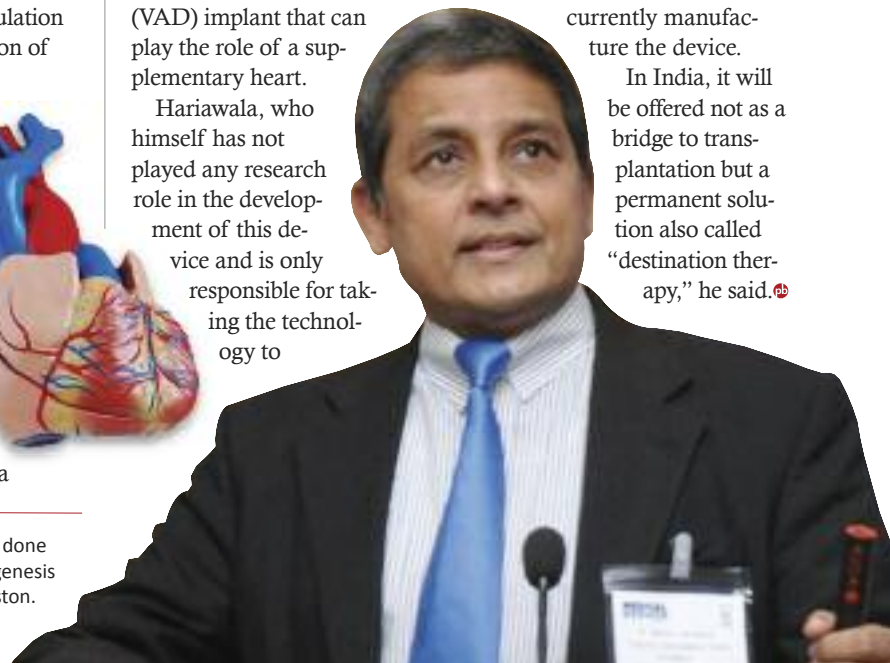
India, hopes to get regulatory approvals in India by 2013.

The current FDA approved devices in U.S. and Europe cost about \$100,000 (₹55,65,500), excluding expenses for surgery. The price point for India is not established but is expected to be high initially, he said. But competition is expected to reduce the price in the long term as six U.S. companies currently manufacture the device.

In India, it will be offered not as a bridge to transplantation but a permanent solution also called "destination therapy," he said.



Dr. Mukesh Hariawala has done pioneering work in Angiogenesis research at Harvard in Boston.



# Infants' saviour

Prof. Alok Bhargava researches the utility of timeliness of child vaccinations through electronic vaccination cards

**W**ith an aim to increase the timely vaccination uptake amongst India's infants, Professor Alok Bhargava, an Indian-American econometrician, has announced to launch a project to investigate the determinants of health status of children in the age group of 0-3 months in Haryana.

The project will be launched after approval of funds from the World Bank, said Bhargava, who was recently in Chandigarh to meet the health officials in Haryana. Alwar (Rajasthan)-born Bhargava, 58, is presently a professor at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy in USA. He received his Ph.D. in econometrics from the London School of Economics in 1982.

In the proposed project,

Bhargava wants to research utility of timeliness of child vaccinations through electronic vaccination cards (EVC) in place of existing paper cards, so that a new model can be implemented in India for increasing timely vaccination uptake.

During the research, vaccinations will be administered via community health centres (CHC), public health clinics (PHC), and Anganwadi centres. Second, for enhancing the quality of breast-milk, a nutritional supplement will be offered to breast-feeding mothers. "Children in the 0-3 month group will be visited every six months and issued paper or electronic vaccination cards and will receive the recommended vaccinations," said Bhargava.

He disclosed that the study would follow approximately 1,500 children at six-month in-



tervals during the 18 months project. The information on child morbidity and anthropometric measures, and socioeconomic variables for households will also be recorded.

"The econometric analyses of the emerging longitudinal data will provide insights for improving physical growth of children; effects of improvements in maternal nutritional status will be investigated," he added.

According to Bhargava, timely immunisations and im-

proving maternal health are important Millennium Development Goals for India, says Professor Alok Bhargava.

proving maternal health are important Millennium Development Goals.

While the nutritional and health status of children is critical for economic development, uptake of basic healthcare services such as child vaccinations is inadequate in developing countries such as India, claimed the econometrician.



Dr. Navin Shah

## Transforming Indian healthcare, with American expertise

**A** leading Indian American doctor has proposed four major projects to transform India's healthcare system with U.S. expertise. Navin Shah, former president of the American As-

sociation of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), met Indian Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad and Health Secretary V.M. Katoch in Washington recently to outline the projects that have the support of AAPI.

Azad responded enthusiastically to his proposals for a U.S.-India physician exchange programme, infectious disease specialty course and training in India, emergency medical services and trauma centres and

the U.S. alumni groups' participation in improving medical education and health care in India. "I would like to see the first generation like me improve my nation's condition. We want to change the working culture and offer facilities in India so that the middle and poor classes benefit," Shah said.

The physicians exchange programme envisages voluntary

mutually agreed reciprocal visits between 63,000 U.S. physicians of Indian origin and 70,000 specialists in India.

The infectious disease specialty training was approved by the Government of India and the Medical Council of India in 2008, but the courses are yet to begin, Shah said.

Shah said Indian-American physicians working with U.S.

medical groups and universities have received approvals for funding for Indian infectious disease teachers to come to the U.S. on scholarship for training and to acquaint themselves with the U.S. model.

The U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) has agreed to support Shah's programmes, particularly the Indian physician exchange programme, as part

of its recent Coalition for Healthy India initiative. "The programme will help improve medical care and services that will benefit the poor and lower-middle classes, who don't have the means to receive the kind of services provided by the private hospitals," Shah said.

USIBC plans the first exchange under the programme in the first quarter of 2013.



# MAN BEHIND CURIOSITY'S SPECTACULAR TOUCHDOWN

An IIT Kharagpur alumnus, Indian-origin scientist Amitabha Ghosh played a key role in identifying the landing site for the NASA rover 'Curiosity' on Mars

A second appears to be an age when you wait for an imminent uncertainty. Unknown fear grips your lungs, numb your thoughts, but keeps your mind alert to receive the good news, or who knows, the bad.

The atmosphere was similar at National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California, USA, who built 'Curiosity', the 2,000 pound car-sized rover that landed on Mars on August 6 morning. Those 'seven minutes of terror', the time between Curiosity touched the top of the Martian atmosphere to the time it landed, however, brought cheers as the robot landed successfully. "I'm safely on the surface of Mars. GALE CRATER I AM IN YOU!!!" said a tweet after the rover landed safely on Mars.

Among the NASA team that had been working on the Mars exploration mission to find out if the Red Planet is or was ever hospitable to support life was an Indian-origin scientist, Amitabha Ghosh.

An alumnus of



This mosaic image shows part of the left side of NASA's Curiosity rover and two blast marks from the descent stage's rocket engines. Courtesy: NASA/JPL-Caltech. (Above) Amitabha Ghosh.

IIT Kharagpur, Amitabha is chair of the Science Operations Working Group at NASA Mars Exploration Rover Mission. His team played a crucial role in zeroing in on Gale Crater as the site for the rover's landing. Overwhelmed with the success of the mission, Amitabha said Curiosity opened up multiple avenues of research, including the crucial question whether Mars ever supported life.

"I feel that Curiosity will herald an era of effective as well as inexpensive method of

exploring other planets using rovers and other robotic vehicles. From the science standpoint, it is possible that Curiosity would be able to find organic compounds on Mars," Amitabha was quoted as saying by a Mumbai-based newspaper.

The six-wheeled rover, weighing about one tonne, dwarfs all previous robots sent to the surface of Mars. It is about twice as long and more than five times as heavy as any previous Mars rover. It has been equipped with 10 sci-

entific instruments, including two for ingesting and analysing samples of powdered rock delivered by the rover's robotic arm.

Ghosh was also part of NASA's 1997 Mars Pathfinder Mission. A planetary geologist of NASA, Amitabha analysed the first ever Martian rock and conducted chemical analysis of rocks and soil in the landing site. His exemplary work bagged him the NASA Mars Pathfinder Achievement Award.

He later worked on two crucial instruments – APXS or Alpha particle X-Ray Spectrometer and Mini-TES or Miniature Thermal Emission Spectrometer — placed on board Mars exploration rover, Spirit, to understand the nature of the Martian rocks.

Ghosh is, however, not the only scientist of Indian-origin involved with the latest Mars mission. Anita Sengupta, a senior systems engineer at NASA, also played a critical role in the success of the much talked about EDL — entry, descent and landing — of the Curiosity rover.

Another researcher of Indian-origin, Ashwin Vasavada, is the deputy project scientist for Curiosity. **pb**

## 'FATHER OF HINDI' TO STAND TALL IN BRONZE

Pandit Nardevji Vedalankar is to be immortalised in a bronze statue during the World Hindi Conference in Johannesburg in September

Pandit Nardevji Vedalankar, widely regarded as the 'Father of Hindi' in South Africa, will be honoured by India at the World Hindi Conference here in September through a bronze statue.

The proposal by the Hindi Shiksha Sangh of South Africa, which is the local partner in the conference being organised by the Government of India, has already been accepted in principle by Indian High Commissioner Virendra Gupta.

The proposal seeks to have high-ranking Indian and South African dignitaries unveil the plaque during the ninth World Hindi Conference, scheduled to be held from September 22 to 24 at the Sandton Convention Centre, after which it will find a permanent home at the headquarters of the Sangh in Durban.

Although of Gujarati origin, Pandit Vedalankar pioneered the promotion of Hindi from the time he came to South Africa from India in 1947.

"On 25 April 1948, with the help of two national organisations serving the religious needs of the Hindi community — the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha and the Sanathan Dharma Sabha, Panditji called a meeting of the Hindi speaking people to discuss the plight of their mother-tongue and to find possible solutions to promote the language," Heeralall Sewnath, Joint Regional Director of the Gauteng Branch of the Sangh said.

"The Hindi Shiksha Sangh was launched at this meeting and he became its first President, nurturing the organisation in this position for 27 years," he said.

He was also instrumental in



introducing an annual Hindi Eisteddfod for both adults and children in 1951 which continues to this day.

The Sangh has also proposed to honour Swami Bhawani Dayal Sanyasi, born in South Africa to indentured laborer parents, for his involvement in the Indian community

The 9th World Hindi Conference was scheduled to be held at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg from September 22 to 24.

in India, South Africa, East Africa and Fiji. This will be done by launching an English translation of his autobiography at the conference. **pb**

## BRITISH AWARD FOR LORD KHALID HAMEED

NRI Lord Khalid Hameed has been given the Freedom of the City of London award in recognition of his work within the medical profession and in promotion of interfaith relations. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was also conferred the honour when he visited London in 1956. Lord Hameed, who hails from Lucknow, is currently the chairman of Alpha Hospital Group and



Lord Khalid Hameed.

chairman and chief executive officer of the London International Hospital.

Prior to this, he was the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Cromwell Hospital in London. Lord Hameed chairs the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council. A Board member of the British Muslim Research Centre, Lord Hameed supports various charities and was awarded the Sternberg Award

for 2005 for his contribution to further Christian-Muslim-Jewish relations. He was the first Asian high sheriff of Greater London for 2006-2007. He was awarded Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award by India in 2009.

It is believed that the first Freedom of the City of London was presented in 1237. The award was originally a working title which enabled recipients to carry out their trade. **pb**



# BOMBAY GIRL

Journalist-turned-novelist Kavita Daswani's crossover novel talks about a tale of new India that straddles several continents

**S**ohana Badshah is a carefree rich "Bombay girl", who moves to London to study interior designing. She falls in love with Jagdish Sachdev, a man of refined intellect. The dream match falls apart, with Jagdish blaming bad blood between the families.

Sohana returns home to discover Mumbai is full of her kind — girls with dyed brown tresses, plucked eyebrows, personalities scrubbed of distinct identities and fortunes to fall back on. She is unsure of her position in the family sweepstakes which pit her against her brother in an inheritance war.

Welcome to 'Bombay Girl' (HarperCollins India) by Los Angeles-based journalist-turned-novelist Kavita Daswani, that talks about a tale of new India that straddles

several continents. It's one of the new crossover novels that are making globalised lifestyle statements with live-in relationships and heartaches.

Daswani, a former fashion editor of the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong, may not be household name on Indian bookshelves, but she has made the smart Indian heroine a bestseller in the West and Southeast Asia with her previous books, 'For Matrimonial Purposes', 'Salaam, Paris', 'The Village Bride of Bev-



erly Hills (Everything Happens For a Reason)', 'Indie Girl' and 'Lovetorn'.

Daswani writes about the communities in the Indian diaspora and how they fit into the traditional institutions of marriage, families and the opportunities for women. She captures the clash of cultures between East and West — and the change.

Why Mumbai? Daswani says she set her story in Mumbai "because it is the only city in India I am most familiar with, connected with".

"My acquaintance with the city began as a child during a family wedding. I used to visit the city as a child," the writer, who grew up in Hong Kong, told *IANS*. Daswani began her career as a journalist at 17.

"I spent many days in Mumbai to research the book. I saw a lot of things that were not around in my childhood... the shopping malls. My first thought was I could be in LA right now... the quality of things, the bars, new restaurants and the sophistication," she said.

Daswani explores the idea of marriage, migration and freedom — in all six of her books featuring Indian women with diverging outlooks to life.

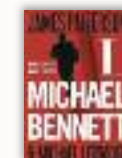
The defiant Anju in 'For Matrimonial Purposes' escapes India for the U.S. after she fails to marry, to find a career and to drop the "failure" tag. In 'Salaam, Paris', ambitious Tanaya Shah lands in her fantasy city to marry a man chosen for her but rejects him in the end for a life in high fashion and glamour. Priya in 'The Village Bride of Beverly Hills' balances her life as a dutiful daughter-in-law with a secret ambition. 📖

## BEST SELLERS

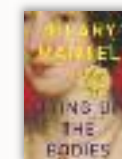
### FICTION



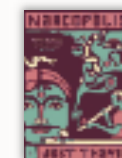
**1**  
**Fifty Shades Of Grey**  
Author: E.L. James  
Publisher: Arrow Books  
Price: ₹350



**2**  
**I, Michael Bennett**  
Author: James Patterson  
Publisher: Century  
Price: ₹595



**3**  
**Bring Up The Bodies**  
Author: Hilary Mantel  
Publisher: Fourth Estate  
Price: ₹399



**4**  
**Narcopolis**  
Author: Jeet Thayil  
Publisher: Faber & Faber  
Price: ₹499

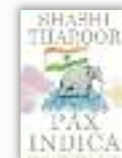


**5**  
**The Case of Deadly Butter Chicken**  
Author: Tarquin Hall  
Publisher: Random House  
Price: ₹499

### NON FICTION



**1**  
**Turning Points**  
Author: A.P.J. Abdul Kalam  
Publisher: Harper Collins  
Price: ₹199



**2**  
**Pax Indica**  
Author: Shashi Tharoor  
Publisher: Penguin  
Price: ₹799



**3**  
**India: A Sacred Geography**  
Author: Diana L. Eck  
Publisher: Harmony Books  
Price: ₹599



**4**  
**Breakout Nations**  
Author: Ruchir Sharma  
Publisher: Penguin  
Price: ₹599



**5**  
**Pakistan On The Brink**  
Author: Ahmed Rashid  
Publisher: Penguin  
Price: ₹499

Source: Bahrison's, Delhi; Capital Book Depot, Chandigarh; Spell & Bound Bookshop&Cafe Pvt Ltd, Delhi



## IN SEARCH FOR THE 'LAND OF PURE'

**T**his is probably the beginning of Sino-Indian diplomacy forged over textiles... Long before the Aryans came to India, a team from ancient Bharat Varsha had visited China, known then as Kosa Karas, to exchange silk for cotton, says Canada-based historian, filmmaker and writer Bhagwan S. Gidwani, the author of the just-published, 'The March of the Aryans'.

Rishi Skanda, an ancient seer, had estab-

lished an "ashram" near the source of the Sindhu river in Tibet, which attracted a number of local people. "One of them presented to the rishi (sage) a cloth of soft, sleek silk. The sage was told that the silk, brought by a traveller from the north, was made from the cocoons of domesticated worms. The traveller had been delighted to exchange silk for the finest cotton made in the Sindhu region," Gidwani recounted to *IANS*.

The sage "sent the silk cloth to the ruler Karkarta Bharat, who began a series of consultations between the weavers' guild and the guild of merchants about the possibility of producing silk".

The merchants guild decided to organise a team to travel north with the sage's help. The team, comprising 54 local residents from Tibet and six weavers from the Sindhu region, left for the "Land of Kosa Karas" in what can be described as the first bilateral visit. Such interesting odd bits aside, a large portion of 'The March of the Aryans' is devoted to the Aryans leaving India — and then returning to

their homeland again after realising that no land in Asia and Europe was as peaceful as India. It is, he says, an attempt to set right misconceptions about the widely propounded "invasion of Aryans" theory.

Gidwani argues that the Aryans did not invade the country but gradually integrated into the country's pre-Vedic spiritual culture. "The Aryan impulse to leave Bharat Varsha (India) arose after the assassination of their spiritual leader, Sindhu Putra, as the apprehension was that the murder had been plotted by the lords of the lands," the writer said.

After Sindhu Putra's death, many had

their Aryan lands and farms confiscated for no fault. But overriding all the fears was their belief that "somewhere under the vast sky there must be the 'Land of Pure' where their assassinated spiritual leader (Sindhu Putra) resides". And they went out to search for that land.

Eventually, it dawned on the wandering Aryans that their homeland of India was better than the rest of the world into which they had tumbled in their search for a home. The 'March of the Aryans' details their knightly deeds and attachment to the concept of 'Daya (compassion), Dana (charity) and Dharma (righteousness)'. 📖



# ART OF SURVIVAL

Watercolour as a medium of art is battling to live in the age of new media — the easy-to-convey digital and video art — observes **Madhusree Chatterjee**

**T**he dark silhouettes of fishing boats anchored on the edge of the water in a misty haze of brown, ochre, black and inky blue draw the viewer to their shadowy depths. Artist Paresh Maity's early landscapes of riverine Bengal in watercolour have a haunting air about them.

But watercolour as a medium of art is battling to live in the age of new media — the easy-to-convey digital and video art. The tribe of watercolourists like Maity have shrunk post-Independence as they have switched mediums.

Artists from the Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan schools are struggling to carry the

medium forward, together with a handful of loyalists from the rest of the country.

"New artists, who are making experimental works, do not use watercolour. A handful of artists in Shantiniketan use it as a medium, but generally it is not a preferred medium for a lot of artists across India," art writer, critic, curator and collector Ina Puri told *IANs*.

Puri, who attended Basel Art Fair recently, said the bulk of contemporary art at the fair, including from India, was "fantastic video and new media art". Watercolour was not represented at the art gala, she added.

The medium, as a tool of realistic representation, recently generated interest at an unusual exhibition, 'Verve', a commentary

on life and landscapes in watercolour in the national capital.

Featuring 18 emerging watercolour revivalists, the showcase was a depiction of new India — where the modern lives in harmony with the arcane. But the artists drew their techniques from the early 20th century watercolour traditions of wash, impressionism and stylised characterisation of figures and nature in thin transparent shades.

"Watercolour is a powerful medium of rich expression whose transparency and glow are inspiring," Vasudeo Kamath, Mumbai-based oil- and watercolourist and an alumnus of the J.J. School of Art, told *IANs*.

"But you cannot play around with the



paints unlike in the oil and acrylic mediums. The genre requires command over the medium of immediate expression that you transfer in watercolour. Watercolours, unlike acrylic and oil colours, wither with sunlight, high temperatures and time, losing their lustre," Kamath added.

He also pointed to a regional affinity to watercolour in recent years.

"In Delhi and the rest of northern India, young artists do not make an effort to master watercolour. It requires a lot of hard work," Kamath observed.

The artist said the British introduced watercolour to India largely to document India during the Raj. It inspired a group of Indian stalwarts like Abanindranth Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore, Asit Haldar, H.L. Merh, Binod Behari Mukherjee, Nand Katyal, Krishna Kulkarni, Karuna Sundari Chak, Sunayani Devi and Gopal Ghosh to experiment with the medium — and improvise.

Pune-based artist Prafull Sawant prefers watercolour to other mediums for his "in the spot fixed paintings".

"Water is a complicated medium in

Watercolour is a powerful medium of expression whose transparency is inspiring. But you cannot play around with the paints unlike in oil and acrylic mediums.

—Vasudeo Kamath,  
Watercolourist



*Ganga Ghat* (left) and *White House* (right) by Pune-based artist Prafull Sawant.  
(Top) A painting titled *Lets Talk* by Prabal Mallick.

today's instant age. The artist has to plan in advance the contrast of light and shadow. Only those painters who have a clear concept of drawing can adapt," Sawant said.

The artist, who has won six international awards for his watercolours from the U.S., regrets the poor promotion of the genre in India. "It is very popular in Europe and America. In the United States, nearly 250 arts societies promote watercolour as a genre with exhibitions and annual awards," Sawant said.

Artist Prabal Mallick has given up all other mediums to paint in watercolour for the last four years and "will do so for the rest of my career as an artist".

"It is easy to copy a master's work in oil but it is difficult to copy compositions in watercolour. It is spiritual and has a mind of its own because it moves around the surface freely," Mallick, a landscape artist, told *IANs*.

Artist Ravi Gossain, who has seen his father M.M. Gossain and his peers from Lahore paint in watercolours, says the colonial medium was "necessitated by the scarcity of paints in the early 20th century — especially in states like Bengal".

But the arrival of new mediums and practices has pushed artists to explore new artistic territories, Gossain said. 📍



# FUSION STEPS

Contemporary dance with classical roots is now finding its own space in India

Contemporary Indian dance drew much attention at the recent Edinburgh International Festival, among the few international festivals dedicated solely to performing arts. A troupe led by Kathak exponent Aditi Mangaldas represented Indian dance with two recitals — one traditional and the other contemporary — in the Scottish town.

Mangaldas led a troupe of nine dancers from her Drishtikone Repertory, to perform 'Uncharted Seas' and a contemporary composition, 'Timeless' on at the Royal Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh.

Contemporary dance in India, unlike in the west, has evolved from classical roots. Over the last 60 years, traditional dances have moved beyond the confines of temples to the proscenium.

A group of early experimentalists in the 1950s — all of whom were accomplished classical dancers — worked around traditional performance styles and introduced chorus-type group dances with free-flowing movements. Dancer Jayachandran Palazhy, in his treatise 'Performing Arts in India: Dance and Theatre', observes that "today, an artist's engagements are often outside structured and institutional set-ups".

"Students of dance are seeking diverse inputs in their education that was virtually impossible a few years ago. Training in established forms of dance as well as other physical traditions such as martial arts, sports and body care systems from qualified teachers and institutions... experimenting with one's own peers, learning from videos or through the Internet and

being influenced by styles that are seemingly at opposing ends of the spectrum, are all part of the dance activity in the country," Jayachandran says.

Jayachandran, who has spent several years training abroad, links the rise in the popularity of contemporary dance in India to the opening up of the Indian economy, easy access to the Internet, increased mobility and the change in attitude towards the emerging arts as a career option.

Experts say that while in the west, contemporary dancers drew on elements from modern and post-modern dances together with elements from classical ballet and deconstruction by icons like Martha Gra-

ham, in India pioneers like Rabindranath Tagore and Uday Shankar (the elder brother of sitar maestro Ravi Shankar) broke through conventions to give traditional dance a contemporary colour in the early 20th century.

According to Kathak guru Vikram Iyenger, Tagore brought the grace of Manipuri, the precision of Bharatanatyam and the drama of Kathakali to create the stylised fusion of 'Rabindra Nritya' at Shantiniketan.

"But I think the father of all Indian contemporary dance is Uday Shankar. He was the one who followed his heart to assemble material from different dance forms to create a new idiom. Before Uday Shankar, Tagore's style was the precursor of contemporary dance in India," Kathak exponent Shovana Narayan told IANS.

"Most dancers have basic training in a traditional style, which is later amalgamated with a western style. Contemporary dance with classical roots is now finding its own space," Narayan says.

One of the pioneers of the contemporary dance movement was Chandralekha, whose unique style could not be copied after her death, says

The father of all Indian contemporary dance is Uday Shankar. He was the one who followed his heart to assemble material from different dance forms to create a new idiom

Bharatanatyam veteran Prathibha Prahlad. The Chennai-based Chandralekha used "dasi attam" — a form of temple dance — with yoga and Kalaripayattu in her contemporary, minimalistic productions to talk about social angst and freedom. Chandralekha was often known to describe her productions as "celebrations of the human body".


"If you look at the growth of contemporary dance in India, most of the practitioners are classical dancers," Prahlad told IANS.

There is a strong sense of style in Indian contemporary dance, Prahlad says. The dancer modernises her content in the framework of Bhutatathata.

For instance, Prahlad interprets Krishna in 'Call of the Flute' against the backdrop of the rural-urban divide in a new contemporary India. Krishna wants to return to his flute, village and Radha — the symbols of the countryside he left behind.

History and cataclysmic events like the two World Wars, along with literature and folk traditions, find expression in contemporary dance in India, says Odissi exponent Sonal Mansingh.

"The technical aspect plays a huge part in contemporary Indian dance; the music is a mix of tabla and jazz. But the inspirations for the body language are from other Indian dances," Mansingh told IANS.

"I have been on the stage for 50 years. I am always contemporary, because I live in contemporary times," Sonal Mansingh signs off. 

A still from the dance drama *Timeless* by Kathak dancer Aditi Mangaldas.



# HEALING MELODIES

Grammy nominee and practising monk Nawang Khechog uses his flute as a bridge across Buddhism, Hinduism and the West. **Madhusree Chatterjee** finds out how...

**N**awang Khechog, a nomadic tribal of Tibetan origin, has clung to his wooden flute for the last five decades since his family fled Chinese repression to make Odisha in India its home.

Khechog, who has performed with bands such as U2 and was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2000, was only six at the time the family fled Tibet in 1959 — about the time that spiritual leader the Dalai Lama also made his escape. But the memories of the flautist are vivid.

A travelling yogi had predicted “bad times ahead for the family and advised them to leave for India”. And the family came to the “warm hospitality that India offered”, Khechog, who now lives in Colorado, U.S., told *IANS*.

Khechog says he has used his flute as a bridge across Buddhism, Hinduism and the West — and a symbol of “spiritual awakening” which eventually led him to study faith with the Dalai Lama. He has been a practising Buddhist monk for the last 11 years.

The musician, who was in India to perform at the World Flute Festival recently, is collaborating with Indian theologians to create a workshop module for ‘Bansi Yog’, a form of music therapy with flute as the healing instrument.

“I have been told to organise an Awakening Kindness tour and workshop to teach ‘Bansi Yog’ with scholars from SVYASA University. ‘Awakening Kindness’ is the essence of my spiritual philosophy and the name of my book. ‘Bansi Yog’ is an Indian form of yoga and, in Buddhism, spirituality is kindness and compassion. Together, they

make a powerful healing combination,” Khechog said.

The musician said ‘Bansi Yog’ — spiritual calm with music — came to him naturally. “I was playing the flute the way I felt — naturally without any grammar or training. I gradually began to feel spiritual. Buddhist meditation taught me universal love and compassion,” Khechog said.

He plays the bamboo, wooden and sometimes the clay flute “known as the ocarina, the ancient version of the flute”.

The musician, who was nominated for a Grammy Award for ‘In a Distant Place’, a flute orchestra album with American musicians, has been lately connecting to India more intensely than before.

“I have recorded some of my father’s songs that he sang 30 years ago. He is a nomadic singer. I told my sound engineer in the U.S. to polish the songs that I had recorded on a cassette years ago. I realised in course of my visits that he was a good musician,” Khechog told *IANS*. The musician’s father lives in a Tibetan settlement near Behrampur in Orissa.

In later years, America has given Khechog his share of limelight and powerful patrons. “I have worked with Brad Pitt in the movie ‘Seven Years in Tibet’ as a co-actor, assistant director and musician. Brad and I have developed good rapport over the years,” he said. Khechog has also composed music for ‘Tibet: By the Snowline’.

Nawang Khechog can play the Tibetan long horn; bamboo, wooden and clay flutes, among other instruments.

The musician, who was in India to perform at the World Flute Festival recently, is collaborating with Indian theologians to create a workshop module for ‘Bansi Yog’, a form of music therapy with flute as the healing instrument



# FRENCH CONNECTION

**REVISITING HISTORY:** This building at the old Pondicherry port was the harbour office during the French period. It has now been replaced by the famous restaurant Le Café.

*La Compagnie française des Indes orientales.* That may seem like a mouthful, but it essentially translates as the ‘French East India Company’. The French foray into India was a late starter in the mid-1600s, more than half a century after the British, the Dutch and the Portuguese had established themselves. At the height of their presence in India, French India comprised Pondicherry (Puducherry today), Karikal, Yanaon and Chandernagore on the eastern coast, and Mahé on the western coast — apart from several minor establishments. Though they started late, the French lingered on well after the British. While Chandernagore in Bengal was ceded in 1950, Pondicherry, Yanam, Mahé, and Karikal were transferred to India in 1954. When they did finally retreat, what the French left behind as their legacy were charming towns with elegant churches, grand buildings in the European style of the day, streets that still bear French names, and policemen who used to, till quite recently, dress up in uniform of the French gendarme! PB takes you to three of their better known enclaves in India — Puducherry, Chandernagore and Mahé — to soak in some French ambience that survives in what have become very Indian towns.



## PUDUCHERRY

## In search of duality

The purpose of travel, a friend and veteran excursionist once said, is to see new places, taste different kinds of food and meet other kinds of people. He would have loved Puducherry. It is today a town with a dual personality: there is two of everything, one French and the other Indian.

For every stately 17th or 18th century church or building built by the French, there is an equally ancient and spectacular temple. The duality is evident on the food front as well. The town is quite simply a foodie's delight, with restaurants offering the best of French and continental cuisine — as well as a sumptuous selection of the region's Chettinad fare. As for the people, the friendly locals apart, the experimental township of Auroville (or the City of Dawn) is a place where you find people of practically every nationality living together in harmony. (And roaming the well laid out avenues of the town, you will come upon a statue of Marquis Joseph Francois Dupleix, the governor of Puducherry from 1742 to 1754 — and it is matched, not too far away, by another: of Mahatma Gandhi. More duality.)

Once you breeze into Pondi via the stunningly picturesque East Coast Road — if, that is, you are driving down from Chennai — and are in a mood for a quick heritage tour, a visit is recommended to the local municipal office. Yes, the HQ of the Puducherry Municipality. It is housed on Goubert Avenue in a building facing the sea and painted a pristine white, which seems to have been transported here from the

The Mahatma Gandhi Statue and the 19th century Light House can be seen from the Promenade beach in Puducherry. (Top) The French War Memorial.



Mediterranean seafront. Nearby is the French War Memorial, where soldiers who died in World War I are honoured in a ceremony on Bastille Day every year (July 14).

Other delights from Puducherry's French past are the Light House built in the early 19th century and the colonial structure that houses the French Consulate which, not surprisingly, is the only diplomatic mission in a 150 km radius. Incidentally, most of the Frenchmen and women who use the Consulate are residents of Auroville — mostly disciples and followers of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother — and are Hindus. Yes, the French diaspora here is majority Hindu.

There are, of course, churches — ranging from the serene to the grand — to visit, and other historical structures to gaze upon, but the way to really enjoy the town is to walk around the French Quarter, taking in names like Dumas Street, Romain Rolland Avenue and Suffren Street, and soaking in a distinctly European ambience.

Now, the food. Let's first get the vegetarians out of the way. There are some really nice vegetarian eating joints in Pondi. Locals strongly recommend Surguru and Jayaram, both of which offer authentic South Indian fare. And if it is North Indian vegetarian you are looking for, the Punjabi Dhabha on Mission street has been recommended by visitors.

Continental cuisine is, however, why you

## TRAVEL TIPS

**How to reach:** The closest airport is in Chennai, which is around 135 kms from Puducherry. Though Puducherry is on the rail map journey, train to and from Puducherry is not very popular. Puducherry is best accessible by road.

**What to see:** Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, Promenade, Church of Our Lady of Good Health, Children's Park & Dupleix Statue, The Mairie, Le Café, Gandhi Statue, French War Memorial, 19th Century Light House, Aayi Mandapam, Raj Niwas. Romain Rolland Library, Puducherry Museum, Arikamedu.

**Accommodation:** Puducherry houses hotels of all categories, including luxury hotels, beach resorts and budget hotels.

**Eating Out:** Try out Le Club, Satsanga and Rendezvous for French and European cuisine; Surguru and Appachi for South Indian fare; Don Giovanni for Italian dishes.

really are in Pondi. The eatery at Auroville is a must-visit, not only for the serenity of its setting, but also for its authentic fare.

And scores of visitors to the town have vouched for the food at the Don Giovanni, with some even going so far as to contend that it is the best Italian restaurant in India. Other restaurants such as Rendezvous and Seagulls offer French, continental and seafood.

For an a non-vegetarian foodie, though, the highpoint of the visit may well be eating at the Appachi, a not-so-fancy restaurant on Rangapillai street offering excellent Chettinad cuisine. And while the mutton and chicken preparations are not to be missed, please make sure you do not leave without having the shark mince. The only problem is that it may not be on the menu every day. If it is not, it's a good enough reason to extend your stay by a day — or two. 🍷

— Moushumi Mohanty

## CHANDERNAGORE

## Where tranquility engulfs you

A small city located north of Kolkata, Chandernagore boasts of a rich French heritage. Situated along the banks of Ganga river, the city has been able to maintain its “difference” from all other cities and abide by its own characteristics.

Chandernagore was established as a French colony in 1673, when the French obtained permission from Ibrahim Khan, the Nawab of Bengal, to establish a trading post on the right bank of the Hooghly river. In course of time, Chandernagore occupied the top-most position among all foreign settlements of Bengal in trade and commerce.

After India's independence in 1947, the French government held a plebiscite in June 1948 and found that 97 percent of Chandernagore's residents wished to become part of India. In May 1950, the French allowed the Indian government to assume de facto control over Chandernagore, officially ceding the city to India on February 2, 1951. On October 2, 1955, Chandernagore was integrated into West Bengal state and completely became a part of India.

This former French colony is dotted with

## TRAVEL TIPS

**How to reach:** Chandernagore is 37 km by road from Kolkata via G.T. Road or Delhi road. Nearest airport is at Kolkata. Local trains from Howrah run very frequently for Chandernagore.

**What to See:** Institute De Chandernagore, the Strand, Sacred Heart Church of Chandernagore, Nandadulal Temple, Underground House (Patal-Bari)

**Accommodation:** Stay at the Rabindra Bhaban Guest House operated by Chandernagore Municipal Corporation.

**Eating Out:** Try the famous Jolbhora Sandesh at Surya Kumar Modak & Grandsons; savour multicuisine dishes at Rosoi and Shalimar.



(Top) The Sacred Heart Church of Chandernagore marks the beauty of the French architecture; the Chandernagore Museum and Institute boasts of a range of French antiques.

churches, convents and other relics of its colonial past. Take a stroll at the Strand — the path along the riverbank — to experience overwhelming tranquility. Chandernagore Museum and Institute (*Institute de Chandernagore*) is a relic of the French era and boasts of a beautiful collection of French antiques (like cannons used in the Anglo-

French war, 18th century wooden furniture, etc.) which are difficult to find anywhere else in the world. The institute still conducts regular classes to teach French.

A good place to visit — for both historians and tourists alike — is the Sacred Heart Church of Chandernagore, which epitomises the beauty of the architecture during the French period. Visit the Underground House (*Patal-Bari*) to appreciate the advancement in the knowledge of architecture and the aesthetic sense of the people of those earlier days. 🍷



## MAHÉ

## Eyebrow of the Arabian Sea

**M**ahé — a land that satiates an intelligent tourist — is a part of Pondicherry territory on India's west coast in Kerala near Calicut. The small town was a French settlement and still retains the erstwhile colonial ambience. The island is spectacular with its huge mountains and lush tropical vegetation, rising to 905 meters at its highest.

Mahé was under the yoke of French rule for over 233 years. They began to rule Mahé in the year 1721. Originally, the name of the region was 'Mayyazhi' which means 'Black river mouth'. The French commodore de pardaillan who recaptured Mahé from Vazhunnavar changed the name as 'Mahé' to perpetuate the memory of French naval captain, Mahé De Labourdonnais, whose skill and enterprise was mainly the cause of the victory then.

When India became free from British rule on August 15, 1947, there were sim-

(Top) The Shrine of St. Theresa; (right) the famous Government House in Mahé; (below) the statue of Marianne at Tagore Park, Mahé.



ilar freedom struggle movements in Mahé as well. Finally, on November 1, 1954, Mahé was de facto handed over to the Government of India; and the de jure transfer took place on August 16, 1962.

Known rather poetically as the 'Eyebrow of the Arabian Sea', the town bears testimony to French architecture and conservation of the language till date.

Every nook and corner of this small land has got its own wonderful story to tell, which keeps your eyes wide with awe and excitement. One of the proudest symbols of the French revolution, the statue of Marianne, can be seen at the beautiful Tagore Park. Marianne is an imaginary character established by the French to mark the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution.

Indulge in fine French architecture, or visit the Government House. A walk along the mini forest behind the Government House will take you to places that offer the most beautiful views in Mahé.

The Arabian Sea, the coastline with golden sand, the greenish Mayyazhi Puzha, coconut grooves, the emerald Dharmadam Island — all this and more can be seen from this point. Don't miss the boating at the nearby Mahé boat house.

Also visit St. Theresa's shrine — the most famous Christian church in the Malabar region — which stands as a monument to the legacy of French rule.

## TRAVEL TIPS

**How to reach:** The nearest airport is at Kozhikode in Kerala, just 85 kms away. One can easily reach Mahé from Kerala and Karnataka by train as the nearest train station is located in Mahé itself. The town is also easily accessible by road.

**What to See:** Statue of Marianne, Azhimukham — Estuary of Mayyazhi River and Arabian Sea, St. Theresa's Shrine, Puthalam Temple, Boat House at Manjackal, Othenan's Fort and St. George Fort, Government House.

**Accommodation:** Various homestay options are available in Mahé.

**Eating Out:** Try the local delights like Malabar fish curry, karimeen pollichathu, konchu curry and Kuttanad duck curry with appams.



## SILENCE OF THE LAMB

Top chef Gurpareet Bains claims his 'lamb masala' curry produces effects similar to sleeping pills and can send a person to slumberland

**C**an't get to sleep? A red hot lamb curry could be the answer! Celebrity Indian-origin chef and TV presenter Gurpareet Bains has created a 'lamb masala' curry that he says will help people sleep, as it produces effects similar to sleeping pills.

The spicy dish contains large amounts of nutmeg, which contains an oil called myristicin that can produce "intoxicating" effects.

The dish appears in the Indian chef's latest cook book, 'Indian Superspices', a collection of recipes designed to fight everyday illnesses.

The London-based chef, known as the 'Asian Alchemist', says he can turn several traditional Indian dishes into dis-

ease-fighting concoctions.

He says the lamb masala curry was created to help people combat insomnia.

"Its ingredients have been used for millennia for their tranquilising properties," Bains was quoted as saying.

Experts, however, recommend eating no more than half a nutmeg in any 24-hour

period. The Indian chef also said he recommends that no more than one portion of his curry should be eaten per day.

Bains became famous in 2009 after creating the "world's healthiest meal" — a cancer-fighting curry. He also created a "hangover-busting cocktail" and a dish that fends off the common cold.

## Make the 'Insomnia-No-More' lamb curry at home with this recipe

## INGREDIENTS:

- Olive oil
- 20 green cardamom pods, lightly crushed
- 6 cloves
- 4 tablespoons grated fresh root ginger
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 ½ teaspoons chilli powder
- 1 tablespoon ground nutmeg
- salt, to taste
- 4 medium onions, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons tomato purée
- 500g (1lb 2oz) lean lamb (preferably leg), diced
- 2 teaspoons garam masala
- 25g (1oz) bunch of freshly chopped coriander (cilantro)

## METHOD:

1. Pour some olive oil into a deep saucepan, add the cardamom pods and cook over medium heat until they become aromatic. This should take no more than 2-3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and allow the oil to cool.



2. Once the oil-and-spice mixture has cooled, add ginger and garlic and cook over low-medium heat until the garlic is golden brown in colour, stirring frequently. This should take no more than 2-3 minutes.
3. Add turmeric, chilli, nutmeg and salt, mix well and cook for about 20 seconds.
4. Add the onions, tomato purée and lamb to the pan, mix well and cook until the lamb is sealed all over, stirring all the time. This should take no more than 10 minutes.
5. Add enough boiling water to cover the lamb and bring back to the boil. Reduce to a low simmer and cook, uncovered, for 1 ½ hours, or for longer if the lamb is not tender. The desired consistency is that of a thick masala.
6. Season with garam masala and chopped coriander (cilantro). Serve with your choice of sides.





# ETHEREAL PALATE

A North-eastern meal is always balanced — and for every spicy dish, there is a bland one, writes Assamese master chef **Atul Lahkar**

**T**he culinary canvas of the North-eastern region is as vast as the lifestyles of the people inhabiting this beautiful land of blue hills and green valleys. Every ethnic community has its own distinguishing dishes, and the preparation method of a dish is hardly the same in the kitchens of two different communities. Yet, there is also an underlying unity in the food habits of the North-eastern people that distinguishes them from com-

munities in the rest of the country.

Sitting in another corner of the country, it is difficult to imagine the variety of medicinal herbs and leafy vegetables that are available on the river banks and the forests of the North-east. The wild pigs, wild chicken and the gayals often make their way to the dinner plates of various communities during festivals; and there are not too many days without any festivity in this region where life means nothing but celebration.

A North-eastern meal is always balanced — and for every spicy dish, there is a bland one. Among the hill tribes, no meal is complete without plain boiled vegetables that go with the more spicy dishes. It is the soup of these boiled vegetables that gives the tribesmen the strength to climb the lofty mountains and walk the miles to their fields.

Vegetable stew, vegetable stern with needles, tender bamboo shoot with chilies, fish cooked in bamboo stem, pork stew with gin-

ger, pork stew with bamboo shoot, dried pork and bamboo pickle, fish with colocasia leaves, fish with bottle gourd, fermented fish chutney, fish barbecued in banana leaves, chicken with ginger, pork with mustard, boiled rice, sweet rice pan cakes, stir fried duck, etc., are some of the popular dishes of the region.

The main ingredients used in the North-eastern dishes should be recorded first, as without those a note on the subject would be quite incomplete. These ingredients are prepared by the tribes of the region on their own. The most common ingredients used by most of the tribes are fermented bamboo shoot, chili, *khar* (alkaline), dry fish, different kinds of herbs and rice powder, besides common spices such as ginger, garlic and turmeric powder. Cane sprouts, tender part of the cane trees, banana stem, green banana, *ou tenga* (elephant apple) and various species of rice are also commonly used in North-eastern food.

To prepare *kharisa tenga* or *banhgaj* (fermented bamboo shoot), as they are called in Assamese, bamboo shoots are collected kept fermented for about four days. *Kharisa* can be of different types such as *xukan kharisa* (dry bamboo shoot), *kharisar asar* (pickle), or *kharisa pani* (liquid bamboo shoot). The Naga people prepare their delicious dry pork with bamboo shoot and serve it with steamed rice. *Kharisa* juice is also used with different herbs in the Naga cuisines. Fish roasted in bamboo stem with *kharisa*, known as *pongson* in the local language, is one of the favorite dishes of the Nagas. The same process is used in other states like Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

Bamboo shoot is also used widely in Assamese dishes. Various pork, fish and duck dishes are prepared with bamboo shoots in the region. Raw bamboo shoot is also used as chutney or pickle. Most of the oil-free foods in Assam bear a taste of bamboo shoot. The wide use of bamboo shoot among the cuisines of the North-eastern tribes can be attributed to their lineage to South Asian Mongoloid tribes.

Another important ingredient used in the region is *khar*. It is popular among most of the tribes, especially in Mizoram, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura. *Khar* is particularly used in preparation of pork, dry fish, and dishes of different herbs. *Khar* is prepared with a key ingredient, also called *khar*. The traditional ingredient is made by filtering water through the ashes of a banana



stem, which is then called *kola khar* (derived from the local term of banana, *kol* or *kola*). A traditional Assamese meal invariably begins with a *khar* dish, prepared with raw papaya, pulses or any other main ingredient. However, the combination of *khar* and *tenga* (acidic) is not recommended. The Bodo, Rabha and Kachari people of Assam are fond of *khar*. Pork prepared with rice powder and *khar* is a mouthwateringly unique dish of the region.

Chilies, in both green and red varieties, are widely used in North-eastern food. In Tripura and Manipur, dry chili powder is used more. Different varieties of chilies are available in the region. It is specifically used in chutneys such as *akhuni* of the Nagas, *irumba* of the Manipuris, *nagakhamkapa* of the Khasis, and *ekung* of the Arunachalis. In Tripura and in Manipur, chili powder is used

(Clockwise from top left) A complete Assamese lunch platter; a Karbi woman in Assam prepares local delicacies; pork with bamboo shoot; fish curry with medicinal herbs

in the preparation of various dishes. The use of Naga Bhut Jolokia (ghost pepper), also known as *bhut jolokia* or *raj jolokia*, is quite popular. A Naga dry pork dish prepared with chilies, ginger, garlic and *mesenga* (a kind of herb) powder is now relished and appreciated in various countries outside India. In Assam, too, pork with *kharisa* and *bhut jolokia* is very popular. Chutneys made with bamboo shoot and ghost pepper are very well known. Pickles from this variety of chili is a favorite in the region.

Green herbs are also widely used in the cuisines of the North-eastern region. Some of these herbs have medicinal value. Some





(Above) A villager prepares fish and chicken in bamboo stems. (Left) *Khar* collected in a bowl.

tribes roast them in bamboo stem after wrapping them in green leaves. This is especially true of *mesenga* herbs. *Lai*, *lengmasor*, *manimuni*, *vedailota*, and *dimorupat* are some of the popular herbs relished in the region. *Oying* in Arunachal, *voksa* in Manipur, *wakpura* in Meghalaya and *maian bai* in Mizoram are some special dishes prepared with herbs. Fish with green herbs is a favorite of the Assamese people.

Chutney is a kind of condiment which is very popular among the people of the North-east. It usually contains some mixture of spice(s) and vegetable(s) and/or fruit(s). Chutneys may be either wet or dry, and they can have a coarse to a fine texture. Chutney is a spicy preparations used as an accompaniment for a main dish. Every tribe of this region cherish their food with chutney. *Aakhuni* of the Nagas, *irumba* of the Manipuris, *kahudi* of the Assamese are unique varieties of chutneys.



*Kharali*, *xukuti*, *betgaj*, *panitenga* are some delicious chutneys prepared by the people of Assam. Chutneys are made on the grinding stone by hand.

Rice is the staple food of the region. The large variety of rice found in the region has led to the speculation that the grain was first cultivated in Assam. Both the indicia as well as the japonica varieties are grown in Assam. The most popular species of rice is *joha* (an aromatic rice). As a staple diet, rice is eaten either steam boiled (*ukhua*) or sun-dried (*aaroi*). Some fine varieties of rice such as karaballam or kauribadam, etc., are available only in Assam.

Rice is also taken as snacks in many different forms: roasted and ground (*xandoh*), boiled in its husk and flattened and puffed (*akhoi*). There also grows a variety of rice

that can be just soaked in water and relished with milk and molasses. *Kumol saul* is one such variety found in Assam. The black *shicky* rice and brown rice of Manipur and *joha* and *bora* varieties of Assam are well-known across the world.

For most tribes in the North-east, a meal without a pork dish is hardly complete. The Assamese love their pork prepared with bamboo shoot or *ou tenga*. Nagas like smoked pork with dry bamboo shoot and *mesenga* seeds. The pork dish *dohneiiong* is popular among the Khasi tribes of Meghalaya. Pork pieces needled by splints of bamboo and seasoned with salt, chili as well as turmeric powder are also fermented for preservation and cooking on special occasions.

Fish occupies a very important place in the North-eastern cuisine, especially in Assamese and Manipuri cuisines. Fish dishes are prepared with bamboo shoot and various medicinal herbs. Wrapped with banana leaf, fish is also roasted. Fermented fish roasted in bamboo stem is also quite popular. Fish is found in Assam more than in the other states of the North-east. A sour fish curry (*masor tenga*) prepared with *ou*, *thekera* (kokum), or lemon is a signature dish of the Assamese.

Rice beer is a popular alcoholic beverage among all the tribes in the North-east. In most festivals, wedding or in religious ceremonies, rice beer is served ritually. Guests are honoured with rice beer on various occasions. Generally, the womenfolk of various tribes prepare rice beer as part of their tradition. Like other cuisines, the taste of this beverage also differs from region to region. *Saimod* of the Missing tribe, *luklau* of Tai Ahom, *suje* of Deuri tribes are some of the local rice beers of Assam.

The simplicity of the Arunachalis is reflected in their food which is easy and quick to prepare. All you need is a vegetable of your choice and some home-grown ginger — no spicing for colouring and no oil to camouflage the look. With no embellishments, the food preserves its natural freshness. *Arek*, *luktar*, *aso adin*, *gorv aoin*, *amin yinig* are some of the popular dishes of Arunachal.

The Assamese on the whole are rice eaters. The main difference between the majority non-tribal Assamese and the other tribes of Assam is that the latter prefer pork, and sun-dried and fermented fish. The use of lemon grass, coconut milk, chili paste and bamboo shoot in the preparation of the As-



(Above) Bamboo shoot; (bottom) *Kahudi*, an Assamese chutney preparation.

samese dishes are influences of the Thai cuisine. Mashed potato (*alupitika*) and colocasia dishes are some other popular dishes of Assam.

*Kanynoi*, *ooti*, *ironba*, *voksa pork* are some of the popular dishes of Manipur, besides various fish dishes that occupy place of pride in Manipuri cuisines. Manipuri dishes have not only retained their original flavor but have also continued to evolve with time. The people of Manipur take pride in having the largest variety of dishes in their repertoire as compared to the neighbouring states.

Besides rice and pork, if there is one thing that the people in Meghalaya cannot do without is *kwai*, the local betel nut. In a typical Khasi kitchen there is always a provision for smoked meat to be kept around the fireplace. They usually preserve meat or fish for months.

Mizos are also rice eaters. They begin their day early and their first meal is *tukthenan*, or early morning meal at around 9 o'clock. A typical Mizo kitchen has a huge furnace over which hangs dried meat on skewers; and vegetables or mustard leaves are stocked, neatly wrapped in banana leaves. Mizos are fond of *bai*, which is a boiled vegetable similar to *khar*, liked by the Assamese. *Bai* and *khar* are similar in nature but the preparation patterns and tastes are different.

For years, the tribes of Tripura have coexisted with the Bengali migrants from East Bengal. They love simple food, just boiled vegetables seasoned with home grown ginger or chilis. Bamboo shoot is another essential ingredient that accompanies almost every non-vegetarian dish in Tripura.

With rice taking centrestage at the meal and the abundant use of fresh vegetables and fruit, supplemented by meat or fish, cuisines of the North-east are high on nutritional value, less on calories and quite fibre-rich.

The dishes of the North-east are easy to prepare. Ferment, roast and boil — these are the three steps followed in the preparation of most of the dishes. The North-eastern cuisines have also been influenced by various communities over the decades: the Thais, who once ruled over some parts of the territory; the Chinese because of their proximity and the Bengali migrants. The unusual combination of these outside influences and local traditions makes the food of the region unique in India. 🍽️

(Atul Lahkar is an acclaimed chef from Assam and an expert on North-eastern cuisine. He runs two signature restaurants, *Khorika* and *Bhut Jolokia*, in Guwahati)

With rice taking centrestage during the meal, supplemented by fresh vegetables, fruits, meat or fish, cuisines of the North-East are high on nutritional value and less on calories

— Chef Atul Lahkar





# Presidential award for four scientists

**FOUR INDIAN**-American researchers figured among 96 named by President Barack Obama as recipients of the 'Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers', the highest U.S. honour for young professionals.

The honoured Indian-Americans were Biju Parekkadan of Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School; Pawan Sinha and Parag A. Pathak, both of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Sridevi

Vedula Sarma of Johns Hopkins University.

"Discoveries in science and technology not only strengthen our economy, they inspire us as a people," Obama said while announcing the awards.

"The impressive accomplishments of today's awardees so early in their careers promise even greater advances in the years ahead," he added.

The Presidential Early Career Awards embody the high

priority the Obama Administration places on producing outstanding scientists and engineers to advance the nation's goals, tackle grand challenges and contribute to the American economy, the White House announcement said.

Awardees employed or funded by government agencies are selected for their pursuit of innovative research at the frontiers of science and technology, it added.

Sridevi Vedula Sarma



## Ranee on US art council board

**US PRESIDENT** Barack Obama has nominated Ranee Ramaswamy, an Indian-American master teacher and Bharatanatyam performer since 1978, as a member of the prestigious National Council

Ranee Ramaswamy



on the Arts (NCA). Announcing her nomination along with other key administration posts, the U.S. president said in a statement: "These dedicated and accomplished individuals will be valued additions to my administration."

Founder and co-artistic director of the Ragamala Dance Company, Ramaswamy has been a disciple of Alarnel Valli, one of India's greatest living masters since 1984.

She is the recipient of the '2011 McKnight Distinguished Artist Award' and was named '2011 Artist of the Year' by the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.

## Dutt joins German football body

**INDIAN-ORIGIN** football manager Robin Dutt has been appointed as the sports director of the German Football Federation (DFB).

"My son Robin has been appointed by the DFB as sports director and also belongs to the team management," Dutt's father Sabyasachi told *IANS*. Dutt replaced former German international player Matthias Sammer.

Born to an Indian father and a German mother, Dutt came into the limelight when he was appointed as the

Robin Dutt

coach of top Bundesliga club Leverkusen in June 2011.

However, he was sacked on April 1 after a 1-7 away defeat to FC Barcelona in the Round of 16 UEFA Champions League match and four consecutive Bundesliga defeats that left the club in sixth position in the league.



## Rajan Gangahar wins best story award for 'Khushiyaan'

**INDIAN-AMERICAN** writer Rajan Gangahar has won the Best Story Award for the movie 'Khushiyaan' at the Punjabi International Film Academy Awards (PIFAA) held in Toronto recently.

The event was attended, among others, by top actors, including Dharmendra, Om Puri, Jimmy Shergil and Sonu Sood.



His first feature film as a story writer, Rajan wrote the dialogue and screen play for

'Khushiyaan', directed by another Indian-American Trilok Malik.

The film has been making rounds in the NRI market and stars well-known names of Punjabi Cinema: Kulbushan Kharbanda, Rama Vij, Tisca Chopra ('Tare Zamin Par'), Deep Dhillon, Shrey Bawa, Vivek Shauq, Gurpreet Guggi, and many more. The film introduces Punjabi singer Jasbir Jassi in the lead role.





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