

# INDIA PERSPECTIVES

Volume 32 ■ Issue 4 ■ October-December 2018

प्रवासी भारतीय दिवस  
*Pravasi Bharatiya Divas*



## Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

January 21 to 23, 2019

VARANASI

**150 YEARS OF THE  
MAHATMA'S LEGACY**

**AIRPORTS OF INDIA**  
RISING TO THE OCCASION

**HORNBILL FESTIVAL**  
NAGALAND'S TRIBAL HERITAGE

**THE BHOJPURI SPREAD**  
FLAVOURS FROM THE REGION



# POTPOURRI

## UPCOMING EVENTS ACROSS INDIA



### REPUBLIC DAY

This is the day India adopted a republic Constitution in 1950. It is celebrated with hoisting of the National Flag and parades. This year, India marks its 70th Republic Day.

**WHEN:** January 26, 2019

**WHERE:** Across the country



### KUMBH MELA

One of the largest congregations of Hindu devotees and tourists, the Kumbh Mela is held at the confluence of three sacred rivers.

**WHEN:** January 14 to March 4, 2019

**WHERE:** Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

### JAIPUR LITERATURE FESTIVAL

A prestigious literary festival, it is attended by authors, poets, musicians and photographers from across the country and the world.

**WHEN:** January 24 to 28, 2019

**WHERE:** Jaipur, Rajasthan



### KALA GHODA ARTS FESTIVAL

A nine-day cultural extravaganza that includes art and craft exhibitions, workshops and vibrant street performances.

**WHEN:** February 2-10, 2019

**WHERE:** Mumbai, Maharashtra



### INTERNATIONAL YOGA FEST

One of the most popular yoga festivals in the country, it includes yoga sessions, workshops by masters and talks by spiritual leaders.

**WHEN:** March 1-7, 2019

**WHERE:** Rishikesh, Uttarakhand



### HOLI

An exuberant festival that marks the onset of spring, it sees people smearing each other with colours.

**WHEN:** March 20/21, 2019

**WHERE:** Across India

# FOREWORD

The holy city of Varanasi is getting ready to host the Indian diaspora from across the world, who will come together to celebrate the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas between January 21 and 23. In the current issue of *India Perspectives*, we offer a curtain-raiser for the grand event. This year, it has been especially planned to give the attending delegates an opportunity to participate in the auspicious Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj and also attend the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi on January 26.

A series of diplomatic engagements, which involved multiple bilateral and multilateral associations, have kept the government busy. Our leaders travelled to Japan, Maldives, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi, Qatar and Kuwait to establish and reinvigorate India's international relations. The Prime Minister attended the ASEAN and related summits in Singapore and the G20 summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

We travel to the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland in our travel section to witness a spectacular show of culture and heritage of the various tribes of this northeastern state. We also journey across the country, immersing ourselves in some of the major Indian festivals, including Durga Puja, Chhat, Diwali, Dussehra, Milad-un-Nabi and Christmas through a photo-essay. In our section on regional food, we delve into the flavours of Bhojpuri cuisine, tracing its culinary journey through centuries.

We look towards the sky to salute the efforts that have gone into the planning and construction of the Statue of Unity in Gujarat, a colossal figure of freedom fighter and visionary, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, which is, today, the world's tallest. Built in a record time of 33 months, the statue is an engineering and design marvel.

We also pay homage to the Father of Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, on his 150th birth anniversary, as we focus on two novel initiatives of the Government of India to commemorate the occasion. First, a rendition of Gandhiji's favourite *bhajan*, "*Vaishnav jan to tene kahiye*" by artists from over 155 countries. The second, an LED video projection of the Mahatma's life on some of the world's most iconic monuments.

Finally, we celebrate with Indian fans, the achievements of our national football team and their captain, Sunil Chhetri, who has spearheaded the resurgence of football across India.



Raveesh Kumar





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# COMING HOME TO VARANASI

As the countdown to the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awards begins, Ishita Goel takes a look at the event's history, format and the special offerings of the edition to be held in Uttar Pradesh in January 2019



External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath light the ceremonial lamp to launch the website for the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on September 15, 2018

**T**he annual Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) conference, organised by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, was launched in 2003 as an engagement and networking platform for overseas Indians, the government and the residents of India. The event has grown in size and impact over the years and marks the contribution of the overseas

Indian community towards their homeland. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is held every year on January 9. However, the dates of the 15th PBD, to be organised in the holy city of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, have been moved to January 21 (to continue till 23), to let those travelling from around the world have an opportunity to attend the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj and the Republic Day Parade in New Delhi.



A flagship event of the Indian government, the PBD conference features plenary sessions, exhibitions, cultural programmes and provides a platform for discussing key issues concerning the Indian diaspora, and lets attendees interact with policy makers, political leadership and other dignitaries.

During the event, individuals of exceptional merit are honoured with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman to appreciate their role in India's growth. Aptly, the theme for the 15th PBD is "Role of Indian Diaspora in building a New India."

## **SCHEDULE**

The 15th PBD will begin with the inauguration of the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, which will be held in partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports on January 21, 2019. The Uttar Pradesh PBD will also be launched on the same day to offer unique opportunities

to members of the diaspora, who hail from the state to reconnect with their roots.

On January 22, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention, in the presence of Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the Prime Minister of Mauritius. The following day, January 23, will see the valedictory address and Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awards being conferred by President Ram Nath Kovind. Himanshu Gulati, Member of Parliament, Norway, will be the special guest, while Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi, Member of Parliament, New Zealand, will be the guest of honour at the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

## **PARTNER STATE**

The partner state for the event is Uttar Pradesh, which is also the fourth-largest state economy in the country. The website for the 15th PBD ([pbdindia.gov.in](http://pbdindia.gov.in)) was launched by External Affairs Minister (EAM) Sushma Swaraj and the



Visitors visit stalls, including one presenting a virtual reality experience, at the 14th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention in Bengaluru in 2017



### SCHEDULE FOR PBD CONVENTION, 2019

#### Day 1, 21 January, 2019

The day will mark the beginning of the 15th PBD convention with the inauguration of the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. The Uttar Pradesh PBD is also set to be inaugurated.

#### Day 2, 22 January, 2019

The convention will be formally inaugurated with address from Sushma Swaraj (Minister of External Affairs), Yogi Adityanath and Narendra Modi (Prime Minister of India) with the keynote address delivered by the Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Jugnauth. There will also be plenary sessions held on various topics of immediate concern to the Indian diaspora from various countries.

#### Day 3, 23 January, 2019

Various plenary session on topics highlighting the benefits of the Indian diaspora's involvement in holistic national development followed by distribution of various awards, including the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awards by the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind who will also deliver the valedictory session.

#### Day 4, 24 January, 2019

The participants will take the special busses to Prayagraj to attend the largest religious gathering, the Kumbh Mela. For the Kumbh 2019, modern technologies are being deployed to enhance the 'divyata' and 'bhavyata' of the festival.

#### Day 5, 25 January, 2019

Special trains (two-tier AC coaches) that will be run specially for the PDB convention will ferry the delegates and participants from Prayagraj to New Delhi. The trains are fitted with modern amenities so that no inconvenience or discomfort is caused to the participants.

#### Day 6, 26 January, 2019

The delegates and participants of the PBD, 2019 will get a chance to witness the iconic Republic Day Parade and will be issued special passes to be a part of the 70th Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi. This will be the final day of the convention and will mark its conclusion in the national capital.

chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, on September 15, 2018. This commenced the online registration for participation in the 15th edition of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

### HISTORY

The decision to celebrate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was taken in line with the recommendations of a high-level committee formed by the Indian government to build stronger bonds with the Indian diaspora. The then Indian Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, accepted the recommendations and announced the launch of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, which was to be organised annually on January 9, in New Delhi. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas conferences began in 2003.

### FORMAT AND FOCUS

In 2015, however, the Central Government revised the format of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and decided that the conference will be held once in two years in a city outside the national capital. In the intervening year, it was decided that smaller, result-oriented Pravasi Bharatiya

French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Jean-Marc Ayrault greets PM Narendra Modi at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas event in Bengaluru in January, 2017



Image: Gettyimages





The EAM with Anandiben Patel, the then chief minister of Gujarat, at a cultural programme during the 13th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, in 2015

## The theme for the 15th PBD is 'Role of Indian Diaspora in building a New India'

Divas conferences will be organised in Delhi to discuss issues that concern the Indian diaspora. It was also decided that Indian missions and consulates will celebrate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas every year. Even states organise individual PBDs.

As a run-up to the 15th edition of the event, the ministry had planned seven PBD conferences or panel discussions in New Delhi in 2017 and 2018. Chaired by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, these conferences

hosted experts from the diaspora, stakeholders and policy makers based in India and foreign countries, who deliberated on various topics. The recommendations made at these conferences were submitted to the concerned ministries and departments of the Indian government for consideration during policy formulation. The action taken by the ministries on the recommendations will be presented to PBD delegates at the 15th PBD convention.

### A SUCCESS STORY

Despite its short history, PBD has been a tremendous success. The third PBD, held in 2005, raised millions of dollars in aid to help rehabilitate victims of the tsunami that had devastated parts of coastal India in late 2004.

The fourth PBD, held in 2006, was instrumental in policy-making as well as fostering co-operation in different fields and connecting with the Indian youth diaspora. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen was a key speaker at the event. The eighth PBD, held in 2010, was reported live on social media. The event also saw the launch of Pravasi Bharatiya, an online platform.

### 10 years of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

<b>2008:</b> New Delhi	<b>2013:</b> Kochi
<b>2009:</b> Chennai	<b>2014:</b> New Delhi
<b>2010:</b> New Delhi	<b>2015:</b> Gandhi Nagar
<b>2011:</b> New Delhi	<b>2017:</b> Bengaluru
<b>2012:</b> Jaipur	<b>2019:</b> Varanasi



# INDIA AT G20

The 13th edition of the G20 summit, held at Buenos Aires, Argentina, helped project India as a leading voice in matters of global importance

BY P SHARMA





Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with heads of G20 member nations at the Plenary session of the G20 Summit in Buenos Aires in November 2018

**P** rime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, to attend the 13th G20 summit from November 29 to 30, 2018, helped strengthen India's commitment to multilateralism. During his stay in Buenos Aires for a little over 48 hours, the Prime Minister attended the G20 Plenary Sessions and the Retreat, participated in important plurilateral engagements as well

as held bilateral meetings with several G20 leaders on the margins of the summit. The G20 comprises a mix of the world's largest advanced and emerging economies, representing about two-thirds of the world's population, 85 per cent of global gross domestic product and over 75 per cent of global trade. The Indian outreach to various world leaders is significant as it underlines the pragmatic utilitarianism that drives Indian foreign policy.

### **BUILDING CONSENSUS**

With the theme of the 2018's G20 Summit being 'Building Consensus for a Fair and Sustainable Development', PM Modi stressed on ways to meet the new and upcoming challenges of the coming decade with world leaders. He also said that through the 10 years of its existence, the G20 group of nations has strived to promote stable and sustainable global growth. At the summit, the Prime Minister highlighted the current challenges the global economy is facing, including the threat of increasing financial vulnerabilities arising out of monetary policies of some advanced economies. He emphasised the need for a proactive and reformed multilateralism. He also presented a nine-point agenda to meet the challenge of economic offenders.

Such was the strength of India's point of view, that the G20 Declaration adopted at the summit highlighted several concerns raised by PM Modi, including action against terror financing, stolen assets, illicit financial flows,

**The theme of the 13th G20 summit was 'Building Consensus for a Fair and Sustainable Development'**

International Monetary Funds' quota reforms and upholding a rules-based international order. Overall India's voice was a voice for moderation and a voice for consensus.

On the margins of the G20 Summit, the Prime Minister attended the BRICS informal leaders summit. He underlined the role of BRICS countries to shore up the global trading and financial system and to introduce reforms so that emerging economies could get a voice.

### **PM Modi met Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping for a trilateral meeting of RIC- Russia, India, China - held after a gap of 12 years**

Prime Minister Modi also took part in two ostensibly antipodal trilaterals on the sidelines of the G20 Summit, where India has emerged as a common factor among the four major powers of the world.

#### **'JAI' HO**

Prime Minister Modi sat down with the leaders of the US and Japan on the sidelines of the G20 Summit, in a first-of-its-kind trilateral meeting. Affirming India's will to work on shared ideals, PM Modi coined the acronym JAI (Japan, America and India), a word that also means victory in Hindi. The Japan, USA and India trilateral served as a gesture to underline Delhi, Tokyo and Washington DC's common interests in a free, open, conclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region based on respect for international law and peaceful resolution of all differences. It reinstated India's commitment to



**Left (L to R)** Prime Minister of Japan Shinzō Abe, the US President Donald Trump with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the India-US-Japan trilateral meeting in Buenos Aires; **Right (L to R)** PM Modi with Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, and Xi Jinping, President of China, at a trilateral meeting held on the margins of G20 Summit in Buenos Aires





Prime Minister Modi with heads of states of BRICS at an informal meeting held on the margins of the G20 Summit in Buenos Aires

making the Indo-Pacific region open for shared economic growth and common prosperity, underscoring the country's preference for non-bloc security architecture for the region. Leaders of the three countries – PM Modi, the US President Donald Trump and Japanese PM Shinzo Abe – discussed five concepts that would serve the common interest of promoting peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

Trilateral coordination between India, the United States and Japan has grown in recent years, most notably with the Malabar joint naval exercise of the US Navy and Indian Navy, including Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force since 2015. By 2017, the US had declared India as a “major defense partner”, granting New Delhi access to defense technologies at the same level as an American ally.

Within hours of the JAI meeting, PM Modi met Russian President Vladimir Putin and

## **PM Modi had a successful meeting with the Saudi Crown Prince; and Saudi Arabia offered to supply oil to meet India's energy demands**

Chinese President Xi Jinping for the second trilateral meeting of RIC – Russia, India, China – held after a gap of 12 years. The trilateral was significant as the three leaders agreed on the importance of reforming and strengthening of multilateral institutions that have benefited the world, including the United Nations, World Trade Organization and well-established as well as new global financial institutions. They stressed the benefits of a multilateral trading system and an open world economy for global growth and prosperity. The three leaders also



agreed to have regular consultations at all levels to jointly promote international and regional peace and stability, to strengthen cooperation through BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) and the East Asia Summit (EAS) mechanisms to address global challenges such as terrorism and climate change, and to encourage peaceful resolution of all differences.

### THE SAUDI FACTOR

Another meeting that was of note was Prime Minister Modi's discussions with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman. The exchange resulted in Saudi Arabia offering to supply oil and petroleum products to meet India's growing energy demands by acting as a "shock absorber" during crucial times in



**Top:** Prime Minister Modi meets Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on the sidelines of G20 Summit in Buenos Aires

**Left:** PM Modi being welcomed by members of the Indian community on his arrival in Buenos Aires





**Clockwise from left:** PM Modi meets António Guterres, UN Secretary General, Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany and Argentina's President Mauricio Macri at the G20 Summit



an extremely volatile global oil market. Both leaders further agreed to establish a mechanism to boost Saudi Arabia's investments in the energy, infrastructure and defense sectors in India. The Confederation of Indian Industry welcomed the bilateral and predicted that "Saudi Arabia is going to be one of the biggest trading partners in the coming years."

### **THE INDIAN EDITION**

Prime Minister also held bilateral meetings with other leaders of the G20 Group. He met the

leaders of China, South Africa, Chile, Argentina, Spain, Jamaica, the Netherlands and Germany. He also met his Italian counterpart, Giuseppe Conte, in Buenos Aires barely a month after the first ever India-Italy Tech Summit held in November this year. The key takeaway from the meeting was Italy's congruence to let India host the G20 Summit in 2022, in its place, on the occasion of the 75th year of Indian Independence. This can be attributed to a regained momentum in Indo-Italian diplomatic ties, beginning with the Italian visit of Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj.

While acknowledging India's leadership role in building awareness and consensus on key global challenges, the meetings on the sidelines of the G20 summit are also a reflection of India's willingness to contribute in a positive and a constructive way in strengthening bilateral and multilateral institutions. The positive outcome of the summit reinforces India's economic rise and its ability to manage diverse global relationships. The Prime Minister's visit to Argentina helped project India as a leading voice in the world on matters of global importance.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, at delegation level talks held in Tokyo during the 13th Annual Indo-Japan summit



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# STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Japan in October, 2018, strengthened the relationship between the two countries and focussed on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest

BY PATANJALI PUNDIT

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently concluded his third visit to Japan for the 13th India-Japan Annual Summit. Organised between October 28 and 29, this was the fifth annual summit meeting between Prime Minister Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and their 12th meeting since 2014. Under the framework of the Special Strategic and Global Partnership between India and Japan, the two leaders had wide-ranging discussions on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest. Prime Minister Modi's visit re-strengthened the traditional bonds of friendship the two countries share and also reaffirmed their multifaceted cooperation in diverse fields. The visit also advanced the mutually-shared vision of India and Japan to promote peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

The two leaders, who share a very warm personal relationship, started their discussions at a lakeside hotel near Mount Fuji. Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Abe spent an

entire day together. PM Modi was also invited to PM Abe's private villa near Lake Kawaguchi in Yamanashi, where the two leaders enjoyed a one-on-one dinner beside a fireplace. In fact, PM Modi became the first foreign leader to be invited to the Japanese PM's home. The two leaders even travelled together to Tokyo by train.

## **A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

During a briefing in the run up to PM Modi's visit, Kenji Hiramatsu, the Japanese ambassador to India, while outlining the main areas of convergence for the two nations remarked, "Trade and investment have dominated relations, defence and security now need to catch up." PM Modi's trip laid the foundation

**The visit saw 32 documents  
being exchanged in the  
presence of the two leaders**



I am convinced that Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan this time will also be fruitful as our previous meetings

**Shinzo Abe**  
Prime Minister of Japan

”



India is going through a massive transformative phase today. The world is appreciating India for its services towards humanity

**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister of India

”



PM Modi meets members of the Indian diaspora in Japan

for a stronger relationship that now includes strategic defence cooperation. Among the 32 agreements that were concluded at the summit, the commencement of the military logistics pact ACSA (Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement) highlights the importance of the statement made by the Japanese ambassador. Once concluded, ACSA will allow both countries access to each other's military bases and facilities. India has similar pacts with France and the US, ensuring a steadily increasing Indian footprint in the Indo-Pacific region. ACSA points to the strategic convergence for the two largest Asian democracies as they reiterated “their unwavering commitment to working together towards a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

Security cooperation between the two countries has further deepened with this visit. The “2+2” Strategic and Defence dialogue has now been elevated to the ministerial level, in addition to the launch of tri-service military interactions between the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force, and the Nipponese Ground, Maritime



and Air Self-defence Force. This development comes close on the heels of the first Indo-Japanese defence exercises held recently.

### **BEYOND DEFENCE**

While the spotlight remained on security and defence ties during this visit, new and interesting beginnings were made in other sectors as well. The MoC between the ministries of Health of India and Japan stands out as one such initiative. The Ayushman Bharat programme, world's largest medicare initiative, seeks to leverage Japan's AHWIN (Asia Health and Well-being Initiative) by "introducing affordable technology, skill development and best practices in healthcare through reciprocal and mutually beneficial approaches." Taking the cooperation in healthcare further, an MoC was also signed between the Ministry of Ayush and the Kanagawa Prefecture to promote and deepen

## **Indo-Japan ties rest on the strong pillars of India's Act East Policy, shared values and vision, and a commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region**

mutual understanding and interaction between India's traditional wellness system such as yoga and Ayurveda and the Kanagawa Prefecture's healthcare policy centered around "Curing ME-BYO", a concept based on traditional Japanese wellness system Kampo. Another highlight of the visit was Japan's accession to the International Solar Alliance (ISA), a project PM Modi has keenly pursued. With the submission of instrument of ratification on October 29, 2018, Japan became the 71st nation to become a part of the alliance and the 48th country to



Prime Minister Modi inspects the Guard of Honour in Tokyo



**Left:** Prime Minister Modi in tete-a-tete with Japanese PM Shinzo Abe at the latter's villa in Yamanashi

**Bottom:** The leaders meet in Yamanashi



ratify the ISA Framework Agreement. Both India and Japan have shown keen interest in striving for greater synergy for a digital partnership with Artificial Intelligence, Internet of things and big data as potential areas of collaboration. In fact, the annual summit was inaugurated with a tour of the Fanuc Motor Assembly facility belonging to the Fanuc Corporation, one of the largest global manufacturers of industrial robots in Yamanashi. The visit holds significance as it hints at India's move towards "Industry 4.0", the current trend of Cyber-Physical systems in manufacturing, also commonly referred to as the fourth Industrial Revolution.

### **A NEW WORLD ORDER**

Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to seeking accelerated and comprehensive reforms within the United Nations, particularly the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), to make it more representative of contemporary



**Right:** PM Modi at the Fanuc Motor Assembly facility in Yamanashi with Japanese PM Abe

**Bottom:** The two Prime Ministers travel together to Tokyo by the express train Kaiji



realities. In this regard, the two nations “emphasised the importance of global collaboration with reform-oriented countries”. As a part of the G4 group of nations, India and Japan recognise each other’s candidature for permanent membership in an expanded UNSC.

### **A PROSPEROUS PARTNERSHIP**

Much like in the past, this edition of the India-Japan summit also witnessed avowal of strong financial ties. Japan has pledged to extend loans to India worth INR 202.773 billion for seven projects, including INR 96 billion for the 500-km-long high-speed Shinkansen rail between Mumbai and Ahmedabad. The Reserve Bank of India and the Bank of Japan agreed to enter into a USD 75 billion currency swap arrangement during Prime Minister Modi’s visit. Under the arrangement, India can acquire yen or dollars from Japan in exchange for rupees to meet short-term liquidity mismatches. This bilateral currency swap, one of the largest such agreements in the world, is seen as an important measure towards improving confidence and stability in the Indian market. The Indian PM attended a series of business



events, including a meeting with a group of Japanese venture capitalists. He also addressed Japan’s business forum. PM Modi spoke to the Indian community in Japan at a separate event as well. In a joint statement with PM Abe, the Indian PM recognised the unparalleled potential for developing ties between the two countries. Recognising the growing convergence in political, economic and strategic interests, PM Modi extolled the value of Indo-Japanese cooperation as a cornerstone in making the 21st century “Asia’s century”.

ASEAN  
SINGAPORE  
2018 RESILIENT  
AND INNOVATIVE

## ASEAN – INDIA INFORMAL BR

15 NOVEMBER 2018, SING



# INDIA FOR ASEAN

On a two-day whirlwind trip to Singapore, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the ASEAN-India Breakfast Summit, 13th East Asia Summit, and also held several other bilateral meetings



# BREAKFAST SUMMIT

SINGAPORE



## India is committed to an outcome resulting in comprehensive and mutually beneficial economic partnerships

commitment to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and participated in the ASEAN-India Breakfast Summit. The summit, held at Suntec Singapore's convention centre, played host to leaders of all 10 ASEAN countries and was chaired by Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong. During the visit, Prime Minister Modi also participated in the East Asia Summit.

He said that his participation in the ASEAN-India and East Asia summits in Singapore reflects India's "continued commitment" to strengthen its engagement with ASEAN members and the wider Indo-Pacific region. During the summit, Prime Minister Modi emphasised on the importance of ASEAN's unity and centrality in India's "Act-East Policy", which has given a renewed momentum to the India-ASEAN ties ever since it was enunciated by PM Modi in November 2014.

The Prime Minister also commended the consensus-driven approach of ASEAN and encouraged an open and inclusive Regional Security Architecture, based on ASEAN centrality. He expressed support for the growing trade and investment relations between India and ASEAN and expounded on the importance of improving regional connectivity with ASEAN, through land, sea and digital channels. During the meet, ASEAN leaders showed interest in deepening maritime cooperation with India, especially in the field of Blue Economy. They also expressed their satisfaction on the progress made on issues discussed at the ASEAN-India Commemorative

**P** rime Minister Narendra Modi was on a two-day visit to Singapore, between November 14 and 15, 2018, to attend the ASEAN-India Breakfast Summit and the 13th East Asia Summit. The visit had multiple agendas, and the PM stressed the need to further strengthen economic ties, enhance trade- and investment-related activities and minimise development gap among nations in east Asia.

Prime Minister Modi reaffirmed India's

PM Narendra Modi with leaders of ASEAN countries at the ASEAN-India Informal Breakfast Summit 2018 in Singapore

## On November 14, PM Modi addressed the Fintech Festival, the first state-head to do so

Summit, which was held in New Delhi in January, 2018. India hosted the summit to celebrate 25 years of Dialogue Partnership, 15 years of Summit Level interaction and five years of Strategic Partnership. This was attended by all ASEAN leaders, who later graced India's Republic Day celebrations as chief guests. During the summit, the leaders adopted the Delhi Declaration.

### EAST ASIA SUMMIT

During the Singapore visit, Prime Minister Modi also attended the 13th East Asia Summit

(EAS), which is a premier leaders-led forum in the Indo-Pacific region. At the summit, the Indian Prime Minister joined EAS leaders in adoption of five EAS statements on issues like foreign terrorist fighters and returnees; marine plastic debris; smart cities; safe and secure use of nuclear and radioactive materials; ICT and digital economy. Prime Minister Modi also commended EAS for adopting the statement on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Returnees and expressed hope that the cooperation between member states will not just stay limited to statements but move towards more practical cooperation.

He underlined the importance of trade and investment in furthering the prosperity and security of the Indo-Pacific region, in his intervention at the plenary. He also emphasised that India remains committed to the early conclusion of a balanced Regional



**Left:** PM Modi meets Prayut Chan-o-cha, the Prime Minister of Thailand

**Above:** Prime Minister Modi meets Scott Morrison, Australian PM, in Singapore





**Left:** Prime Minister Modi meets the American Vice President, Michael R Pence

**Bottom:** PM Modi with Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore, on the sidelines of the East Asia summit



Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). This is the proposed free trade agreement being negotiated among 16 nations - 10 ASEAN member states and India, Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea. Once finalised, the agreement will cover 45 per cent of the world's population, 40 per cent of world trade and 34 per cent of global GDP, amounting to US \$21.3 trillion. Since 2012, 24 rounds of negotiations have been held at the experts' level, along with ministerial sessions. India remains committed to a balanced outcome that will result in a modern, comprehensive, high quality and mutually beneficial economic partnership.

On the margins of the EAS summit, the PM held a bilateral meeting with US vice president Mike Pence, and discussed ways to further strengthen ties in areas such as trade, defence and security.

### **FINTECH FESTIVAL**

On November 14, PM Modi delivered



## India remains committed to the formation of the RCEP, the proposed free trade agreement among 16 nations

his keynote address at the prestigious Fintech Festival, becoming the first head of government to do so. The Singapore Fintech festival is the world's largest financial technology event and PM's Modi's participation in it gives a boost to India's aspiration to become a global innovation hub. The event saw enthusiastic participation from several Indian companies.

The PM said that the festival is the right forum to showcase India's strengths in this fast-growing sector and to forge international partnerships for fostering innovation. "There is an explosion of fintech innovation and enterprise in India. It has turned India into a leading fintech and startup nation in the world. The future of

**Above:** Prime Minister meets the winning teams of India-Singapore Hackathon 2018

**Right:** PM Modi delivers his address at the Singapore Fintech festival



fintech and Industry 4.0 is emerging in India," said the Prime Minister in his address. On the same day, the Prime Minister felicitated the winners and participants of India-Singapore Hackathon conducted jointly by All India Council for Technical Education and Nanyang Technological University of Singapore. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Singapore visit is a sign of India's continued commitment to ASEAN and towards making the Indo-Pacific region secure and prosperous.





External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj meets Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani, foreign minister of Qatar

# A HAND OF FRIENDSHIP

On her maiden visit to Qatar and Kuwait, External Affairs minister Sushma Swaraj worked towards re-affirming the warm bilateral ties that India shares with these two Gulf nations

**T**he External Affairs minister, Sushma Swaraj, recently concluded a successful visit to two West Asian countries, Qatar and Kuwait, strengthening the historical relationship India has had with these nations.

Her visit to Qatar was the first by any Indian Minister of External Affairs. On account of enhancing engagement with the Gulf region,

which is India's extended neighbourhood, the aim of the four-day trip was to provide an opportunity to hold a discourse with the political heads of the two countries, concerning a wide range of global, regional and bilateral issues. The minister had engagements in the State of Qatar on October 28 and 29 and in the State of Kuwait on October 30 and 31, 2018.

Other than diplomatic interactions,

the External Affairs Minister (EAM) also met Indian community members residing in the two nations.

### **QATAR**

During her successful two-day visit to Qatar, EAM Swaraj held delegation-level talks with her counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. It was announced that India and Qatar will establish a joint commission to regularly review all bilateral matters, as well as regional and global issues of mutual interest. A declaration to establish the joint commission between the two nations was also released. The declaration stated that the inter-ministerial High Level Joint Committee will be tasked to strengthen the relations between the two countries, particularly in the fields of economics, commerce, culture, science, technology and education. The minister also met the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani.

### **India and Qatar will establish a joint commission to regularly review all bilateral matters**

India and Qatar share a cordial relationship that goes back several centuries. In fact, about seven lakh Indians reside in Qatar today, forming the largest expatriate community in the Gulf country. Qatar supplies more than 50 per cent of India's natural gas imports and India-Qatar bilateral trade stood at USD 9.9 billion in 2017-18. The close ties between the two nations were further boosted by the visit of the Emir of Qatar in March 2015 and Prime Minister of Qatar, Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, to India in December 2016 and the subsequent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Qatar in June 2016.



EAM Swaraj receives a warm welcome at the Doha International Airport





**Left to right:** External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj arrives in Doha for the first leg of her visit; EAM Swaraj is greeted upon her arrival in the State of Kuwait

The EAM also invited Qatari business houses to invest in India in industries such as petrochemical, infrastructure, agriculture and food processing. The minister interacted with representatives of the Indian diaspora, too, in Doha, Qatar's capital.

## KUWAIT

On the second leg of her trip, the EAM visited the oil-rich Gulf country of Kuwait, where she was accorded a warm welcome. India and Kuwait share close and friendly bilateral relations and over eight lakh Indian nationals reside in Kuwait. During 2017-18, Kuwait was the ninth-largest oil supplier to India and met about 4.6 per cent of India's energy needs. Total bilateral trade with Kuwait during 2016-17 was USD 5.9 billion and 2017-18 was USD 8.53 billion.

EAM Swaraj called on Kuwait's top leadership, including Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and discussed a range of issues to strengthen bilateral ties. She also raised the Indian community's concerns with the leader. She met her counterpart, Sheikh Sabah Al Khalid Al Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, as well.

Upon arriving in Kuwait, the minister laid a floral wreath at a statue of Mahatma Gandhi. And later, in the evening, EAM Swaraj appreciated Kuwaiti singer Mubarak Al-Rashid's rendition of Gandhiji's favourite *bhajan Vaishnav jan to*. Later, EAM Swaraj interacted with the Indian community in Kuwait, which contributes significantly to the economic and scientific development of the country.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Qatar

EAM Swaraj invited Qatari investments in industries like petrochemicals, infrastructure, agriculture and food processing.

India and Qatar signed a declaration to establish a joint commission at the level of External Affairs and Foreign Minister to periodically review progress in various cooperation initiatives.

### Kuwait

In Kuwait, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj discussed issues of bilateral concern and explored avenues for enhancing and further strengthening economic and investment cooperation.

EAM Swaraj called on Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and raised the concerns of the Indian community with him.

Reiterating India's focus on the world's second-largest continent, the Vice President of India M Venkaiah Naidu embarked on a tour of Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi

With more than 25 high-level visits in the last four years, this visit to the three African

The Vice President arrived in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, on the evening of October 31, and was received with much warmth. The



visit was also significant as such a high-level representation from India to Botswana was taking place after a gap of eight years. The Vice President met his Botswana counterpart Slumber Tsogwane and together inaugurated the 2018 Global Expo Botswana. With the participation of 25 Indian companies in the expo, India showcased its economic and industrial prowess in various sectors. During the last few years, the relationship between the two countries has diversified significantly, covering areas such as defense, trade, health and capacity building. Trade relations have also increased and in 2017-18, India's bilateral trade with Botswana registered an impressive growth of 26 per cent, taking it to USD 1.75 billion.

The Vice President took time out of his hectic schedule to tour the Botswana Diamond Trading Centre. India imports nearly 27 per cent of its rough diamond requirements from Botswana, which is home to some of the largest diamond mines in the world.

The VP also held delegation-level talks, addressed the Indian community in Botswana and took part in a CEO roundtable. In a special gesture, which highlighted the strength of the relationship between the two nations, the President of Botswana, Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, flew back from his visit to Mozambique to meet the Indian VP.

## ZIMBABWE

The Vice President's arrival in Zimbabwe's capital Harare on November 2, 2018, marked the first visit of a high-level Indian official to the country after erstwhile PM, HD Deve Gowda visited the country in 1996. Here, the

**The Indian VP's visit was the first by a high-ranking Indian official to Zimbabwe after a gap of 21 years**

**Facing page:** The Indian Vice President and Slumber Tsogwane, Vice President of Botswana, co-inaugurate the 13th Global Expo in Botswana

**Right:** The Indian VP being greeted in traditional style as he arrives in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana



## Malawi and India signed three MoUs on extradition, cooperation in atomic energy and visa waiver

VP called on Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa and had a "very warm" meeting lasting over an hour. The Zimbabwean President thanked India for "standing by the country during its period of isolation" and deeply appreciated India's stand on refusing to join others in imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe. He also expressed confidence that "this visit of the Vice President of India will take our relations to the next level".

In addition to addressing the 9,000-strong Indian diaspora in Zimbabwe and attending the India-Zimbabwe business forum, the Vice President and the Zimbabwean Vice President witnessed the signing of numerous

agreements between the two countries in the fields of mining, information and communications technology, visa waiver, traditional medicine, broadcasting and art and culture. India and Zimbabwe have a long history of cordial relations and India has been providing assistance to Zimbabwe in areas like telecommunications and power.

India also announced a loan of USD 310 million to finance a rehabilitation project for Hwange thermal power plant, Zimbabwe's second largest. The project will include upgrading the station and extending its lifespan. The Vice President also laid the foundation stone for the Chancery Building which will house the new Indian embassy in Harare. The building will bear India-inspired architectural features such as the Ashoka Chakra and also house a yoga centre.

### MALAWI

Vice President Venkaiah Naidu arrived in





**Facing page:** The Indian VP pays homage at the National Heroes Acre in Harare, Zimbabwe. The site pays tribute to those who fought against the brutal oppressive regime in Zimbabwe

**Right:** The Vice President arrives in Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi



## India imports nearly 27 per cent of its rough diamond requirements from the mines in Botswana

Lilongwe, the Malawian capital, on November 4. The same evening he addressed the Indian diaspora in Malawi, which predominantly hails from the state of Gujarat. Numbering around 11,000, the Indian community has significantly contributed to the economic and social fabric of Malawi and has risen to important positions.

During the last leg of the tour in Malawi, the Vice President also finalised an agreement to extend a new line of credit for USD 215.16 million for 18 water projects spread over many areas in Malawi, a landlocked nation. The two sides also signed three MoUs on extradition,

cooperation in atomic energy and visa waiver. A banquet was hosted in the honour of the Indian Vice President by the President of Malawi, Arthur Peter Mutharik, where he mentioned his “special regard for India” and recalled his three visits to the country.

The Indian Vice President also inaugurated an event, India for Humanity, to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. In the field of health-care and medicine, the Vice President conveyed India’s agreement to gift the Bhabatron Cancer Treatment Machine for the Kamuzu Central Hospital’s cancer wing in addition to 10 ambulances as well as supply of essential medicines.

The successful visit by the VP has taken India’s relationships with the three African nations, which share similar values, common bonds of democracy and a shared colonial past, to the next level by reinforcing existing ties and forging cooperation in new areas.

# RELATIONSHIP REBUILT

As a new regime takes charge in the Maldives, traditionally strong relations between India and the island nation are being revitalised with highest-level meetings between the two countries



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being greeted by Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, President of Maldives, during the former's visit to Male, the capital of Maldives, on November 17, 2018



**T**he tiny archipelago of Maldives is critically located in the Indian Ocean and is vital for our country's shipping routes. Maldives and India have traditionally shared a strong relationship that has been strengthened over the last couple of months with a flurry of highest-level visits between the nations, especially after the election of the new President of Maldives, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.

### **A NEW HOPE**

The presidential inauguration ceremony of President Solih on November 17, 2018, prompted the Indian Prime Minister to undertake his long overdue maiden visit to the Maldives, the only SAARC member nation PM Modi was yet to visit. It was also the first by an Indian head of state to the Maldives since 2011. The strength of the relationship between India and Maldives was underscored by the fact that

the Indian Prime Minister, seated with the former Presidents of Maldives, was the only foreign leader present at the ceremony.

The two leaders held talks after the ceremony and expressed confidence in “renewal of the close bonds of cooperation and friendship” between India and Maldives. A joint statement was signed where the two leaders noted the resilience of Indian-Maldivian relationship and acknowledged “the importance of maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean and being mindful of each other's concerns and aspirations for the stability of the region”. Mariya Ahmed Didi, Maldivian defence minister, in a statement to the media, remarked that “Maldivians were

## **India and Maldives are focussing on renewing their traditionally strong relationship**



**L to R:** The First Lady of Maldives Fazna Ahmed, President of Maldives Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, President of India Ram Nath Kovind with his wife Savita Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Rashtrapati Bhavan during the Maldivian President's recent visit to India

very excited to see Prime Minister Modi attend the event and that Maldives will always follow an 'India First' policy." In return, Prime Minister Modi pledged Indian assistance to Maldives for sustainable social and economic development and "welcomed the expanding opportunities for Indian companies to invest in the Maldives in different sectors for the mutual benefit of both countries". The leaders also recognised the need for facilitating easier visa procedures for each other's nationals.

### INDIA FIRST

Within a few days of the presidential inauguration and PM Modi's visit, the foreign minister of the Republic of Maldives, Abdulla Shahid arrived in India. He was accompanied by a high-level delegation. Foreign minister Shahid

held bilateral talks with his Indian counterpart Sushma Swaraj, defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman and called upon President Ram Nath Kovind.

### NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST

What further highlighted the increasing closeness between the two nations was that within a month of his swearing-in ceremony, President Solih undertook his maiden foreign visit to India, on the invitation of Prime Minister Modi. President Solih, on the visit (between December 16 and 17), was accompanied by a high-level ministerial and business delegation. In a special gesture, the Maldivian President and First Lady stayed at the Rashtrapati Bhavan as guests of the Indian President. The gesture was an example of the warmth and respect shared by the two governments. President Solih described India as a "closest friend and one of its most important trading partners." India reciprocated the move, by announcing an assistance of USD 1.4 billion through

## India has announced an assistance of USD 1.4 billion to Maldives



Minister of External Affairs, Government of India, Sushma Swaraj during a meeting with Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, President of the Republic of Maldives, in New Delhi on December 17, 2018





**Left:** EAM Swaraj meets Abdulla Shahid, foreign minister of Maldives, in New Delhi on November 26

**Above:** PM Modi along with the President of Maldives issue a press statement during the latter's state visit to India in New Delhi on December 17

## Maldives' President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih undertook his maiden foreign visit to India

low-interest loans over several installments, budgetary support and currency swap to fulfill the socio-economic development programmes of the Maldives.

### **MULTILATERAL COOPERATION**

Following the talks, the two sides signed agreements on facilitation of visa arrangements, on cultural cooperation, for establishing mutual cooperation to improve the ecosystem for agribusiness and on cooperation in the field of information and communications technology and electronics. Both leaders also reviewed efforts "to promote bilateral trade and investment ties" and "agreed to promote closer economic cooperation".

### **A SECURE INDIAN OCEAN**

A joint statement issued by PM Modi and President Solih recognised that the security interests of both the countries are interlinked in the region and the leaders also reiterated their assurance of being mindful of each other's concerns and aspirations for the stability of the neighbourhood and not allowing their respective territories to be used for any activity inimical to the other. Additionally, the two leaders have agreed to strengthen cooperation to enhance maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region through coordinated patrolling and aerial surveillance, exchange of information and capacity building. India also welcomed Maldives back to the Commonwealth and as the newest member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association. With the island nation led by President Solih, there is much optimism in both New Delhi and Male that together the two countries will be able to revitalise and bolster their important strategic relationship.

# STANDING TALL

Almost twice as high as the famous Statue of Liberty in New York, the Statue of Unity, standing amidst the Satpura and Vindhya range of mountains, in Gujarat, is a breathtaking sight and an engineering marvel

BY NAMITA KUMAR

It's huge, gigantic almost! That is my first reaction as our car speeds down the winding road leading to the towering Statue of Unity (SoU). A long bridge connects the mainland to the Sadhu Bet island, near the Sardar Sarovar Dam, on which the statue stands. Silhouetted against the surrounding Satpura and Vindhya mountains and the blue sky, I finally believe what a recent international media report had said, that this colossal structure can be seen from space! The legacy of India's Iron Man, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, lives on in the form of this massive statue dominating the Narmada river basin in Gujarat. He towers high, as if, keeping an eye over the beloved land he had helped become independent.

Standing at a height of 182 m, the Statue of Unity, dedicated to the freedom fighter and statesman, is the tallest in the world. It depicts Sardar Patel in a walking pose, clad in his characteristic simple attire.

About 100 times the height of a five-and-a-half feet tall person, one can see the statue from as far away as eight km and is filled with pride on seeing the man-made structure, built amidst hills, almost touching the sky. The SoU was inaugurated on October 31, 2018, by Prime

Minister Narendra Modi to commemorate Patel's 143rd birth anniversary.

The buzzing entrance to the SoU complex greets me, as I alight from the car at the spacious parking. Everything here is beyond human proportions, and I feel like a lilliput in the land of giants! From the parking, special shuttle buses ferry tourists to the statue's base. There are eco-friendly golf carts also available and a jetty pickup service as well, for those who wish to take a ferry to the island.

A 15-minute ride later I arrive at the pathway to the statue, which is surrounded by a manicured garden. As I stand on the travelator and inch closer to the monument, its size dwarfs me. I keep straining my neck to an impossible angle, till the head of the statue seems to have disappeared into the sky! And I haven't yet reached its foot!

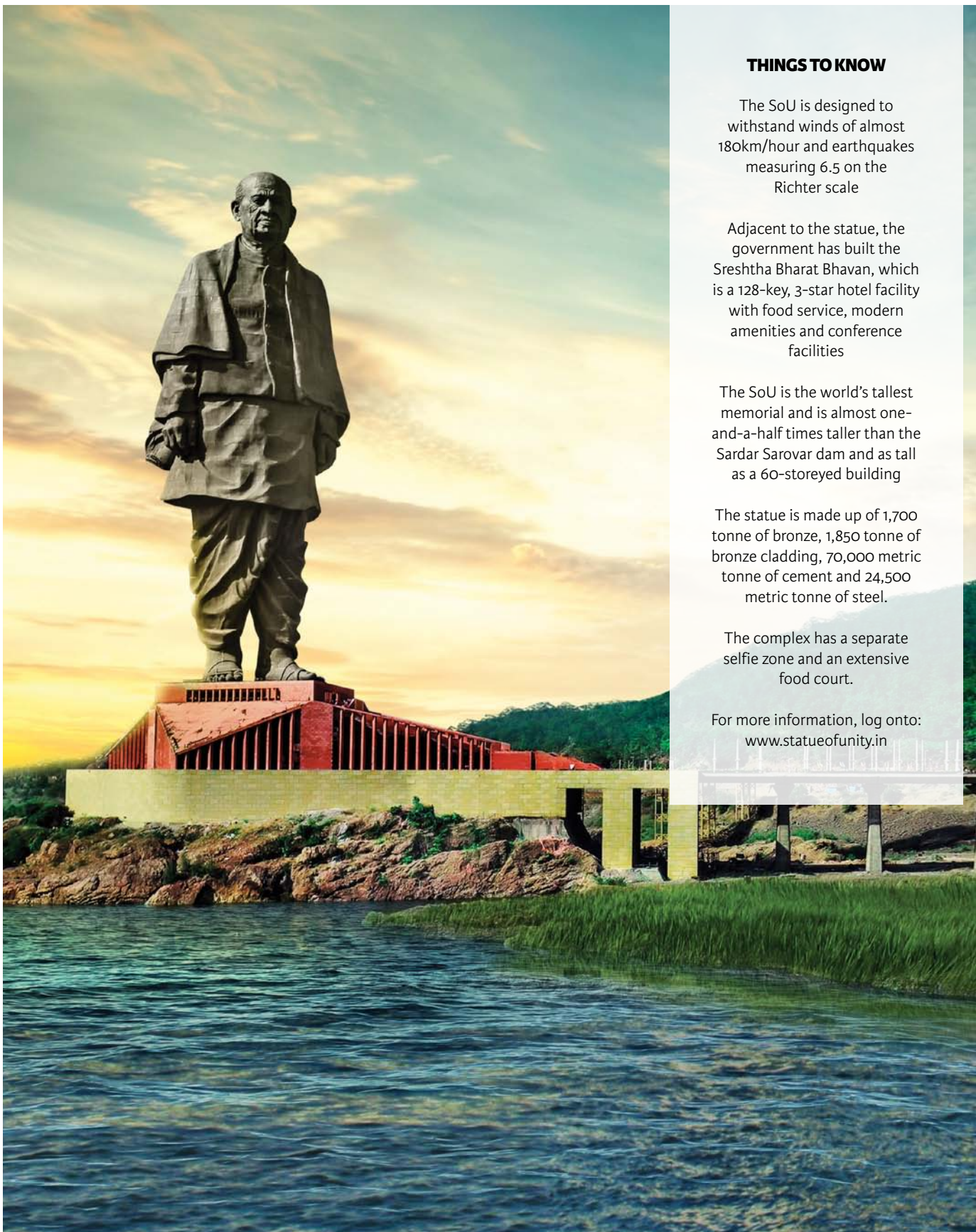
I think I ride up four escalators, I lose count, as I gain height, to reach the statue's actual base. There are two types of tickets available: one to the base of the statue, which is located at the level of Patel's feet and the other to go up to the viewing deck.

## VIEWING GALLERY

Built on a star-shaped geometric base that

A panoramic view of the 182-m-high Statue of Unity, dedicated to former deputy PM Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel





### THINGS TO KNOW

The SoU is designed to withstand winds of almost 180km/hour and earthquakes measuring 6.5 on the Richter scale

Adjacent to the statue, the government has built the Sreshtha Bharat Bhavan, which is a 128-key, 3-star hotel facility with food service, modern amenities and conference facilities

The SoU is the world's tallest memorial and is almost one-and-a-half times taller than the Sardar Sarovar dam and as tall as a 60-storeyed building

The statue is made up of 1,700 tonne of bronze, 1,850 tonne of bronze cladding, 70,000 metric tonne of cement and 24,500 metric tonne of steel.

The complex has a separate selfie zone and an extensive food court.

For more information, log onto: [www.statueofunity.in](http://www.statueofunity.in)

## HOW TO REACH

About 200 km from Ahmedabad, and about 400 km from Mumbai, you can reach the SoU site by State Highway 11 and 63. You will arrive at the nearest town of Kevadia in the Narmada district, and from there the statue is only 3.5 km away. Both the nearest airport and railway station in Vadodara are about 90 km away.

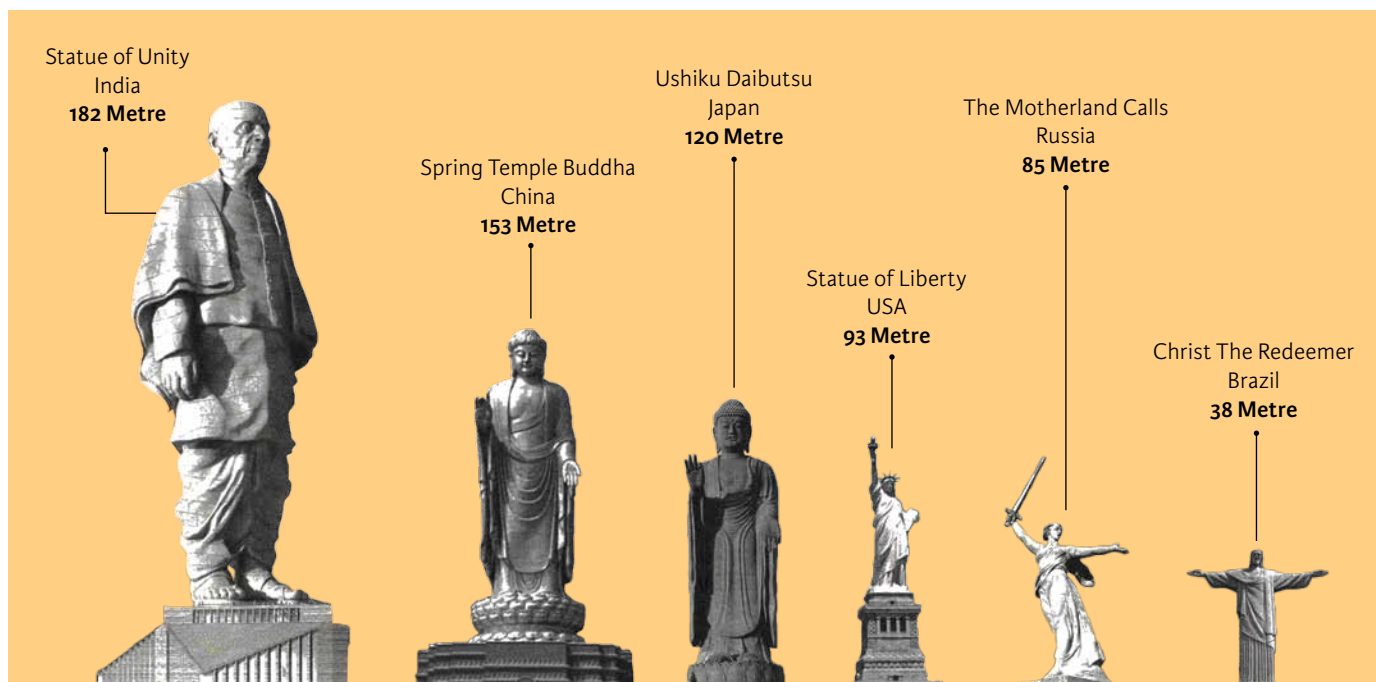
## Sardar Sarovar dam

The Narmada is the fifth-largest river in the Indian subcontinent, traversing 1,312 km through Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat to drain into the Arabian Sea. The Sardar Sarovar Dam is built on the Narmada near Gujarat. The dam is 1,210 m long and is the world's second-largest in terms of volume of concrete used. The river catchment area above the dam is spread across 88,000 sq km.

covers the entire Sadhu hill, the SoU has a viewing gallery at 135 m, at the statue's chest level, that can be reached via two high-speed elevators. The gateway to the elevators is through an exhibition gallery, in which you can marvel at a model of the statue and an elaborate blue print among other exhibits. The elevators travel 150 m in half a minute and can carry 26 people at one time. As it soundlessly shoots up, I feel a sense of pride at this engineering marvel!

From the viewing gallery, reinforced with steel grids, I take in the breathtaking views of the surroundings and of the Sardar Sarovar reservoir at a distance. One can also see the Satpura and Vindhyaachal mountain ranges.

Interestingly, it's not just the statue that throws light on Patel's life and achievements, but also a spectacular laser show, which displays other notable aspects of the statesman's life. It traces the life of Patel and talks about why the statue has been erected in his honour. The show also outlines the leader's contribution to the nation. However, what really fascinates are the realistic projections that show Patel in different







Standing at a height of 182 m, the Statue of Unity, dedicated to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, is the tallest in the world. It towers over the surrounding landscape

## The statue has a viewing gallery at 135 m, which can be reached via two high-speed elevators

phases of his life: in a lawyer's garb, images from his 'Bharat Chodo' movement (asking the British to leave India) and in his characteristic kurta pajama.

### ENGINEERING MARVEL

Constructed by engineering giant Larsen and Toubro, SoU was built in a record time of 33 months. It is 98 feet taller than China's Spring Temple Buddha statue (the second tallest in the world), which took 11 years to build. The SoU comprises two semi-joined, composite concrete cylindrical cores surrounded by a steel space frame to support the external cladding. The face of the statue is particularly noteworthy and 93-year-old sculptor Ram Sutar has made it to have a poised countenance. Patel's head is held high with his arms at his side, and the leader is supposed to appear to be walking on water

towards the Sardar Sarovar dam, with its left leg placed slightly forward. It is said that figuring out the perfect posture for the statue was a challenge. The engineers scanned around 2,000 photographs, and consulted several historians to choose the final picture.

### THE 'LOHA AND EARTH' CAMPAIGN

The foundation stone of the statue was laid five years ago, on October 31, 2013, by PM Modi, when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat. During the launch, he had also launched the "loha (iron) and earth" campaign under which soil and iron farm implements were collected from over 5,50,000 villages to construct the statue. By 2016, 135 metric tonne of iron had been collected in various forms and these were used in the construction. The soil collected was used to make the symbolic Wall of Unity in the complex. The statue has been built at an estimated cost of USD 30 billion and is believed to be able to generate 15,000 direct jobs for local tribal people every year.

With inputs from **Malti Dutta**, assistant director, Ministry of Tourism



Image: Gettyimages

# THE SPIRIT OF FESTIVALS

Throughout autumn and winter, different regions of India celebrate numerous festivals, most of which mark the victory of good over evil. We take you through some of these festivals as they are celebrated with their vibrant traditions and enthusiastic fervour across the country







**Facing page:** Women participate in a ritual called *sindoor khela*, in which married women smear each other with vermillion, on the last day of Durga Puja that commemorates Goddess Durga's victory over Mahishasura. This festival is most vibrantly celebrated in the state of West Bengal

**Left:** The five-day Durga Puja culminates on Vijaydashami. On this day, devotees immerse idols of the deity in a nearby water body in a ritual called *visarjan* and bid farewell to Her, while wishing that She returns the following year





**Ramleela is an ancient and very popular Indian tradition, which involves the enactment of the Hindu epic Ramayana**





Image: Gettyimages

**Left:** Artists dressed as Lord Rama and Lord Laxmana aim with bow and arrows at an effigy of Ravana, as they take a part in a religious procession during Ramleela. This festival is celebrated across India during Navratri

**Below:** On Dussehra, which marks the end of the 10-day Navratri festival, effigies of Ravana, his brother Kumbhakarana and son Meghnad are set alight in open grounds across the country. This symbolises the victory of Lord Rama over Ravana





Image: Gettyimages



Image: Gettyimages





**Facing page top:** Thousands of people gather at river banks and lakes during Chhath festival, which is celebrated mostly in the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand and also in all major cities of the country

**Facing page bottom:** Devotees pray to Surya Devta or the Sun God during the festival of Chhath. During this four-day festival, believers fast and pray to the sun during dawn and dusk with offerings of water, milk, seasonal vegetables and fruits. This is done by standing in a water body

**Above:** Hindu devotees perform rituals on the occasion of Chhath festival at Gomti River in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh



**Diwali, or Deepavali, is one of India's biggest and most important festivals. It gets its name from the row (*avali*) of clay lamps (*deepa*) that people light**







**Facing page:** A woman lights an earthen lamp or *diya* at the Lord Ramachandraji Temple in Jaipur on the occasion of Diwali. Diwali or Deepavali is one of the most important Hindu festivals in India and signifies the victory of light over darkness. On this day, devotees pray to Goddess Lakshmi along with Lord Ganesha and homes and temples are decorated with lights. Gifts and sweets are also exchanged. It also said that the festival was first celebrated to mark the return of Lord Rama to his kingdom Ayodhya after vanquishing Ravana

**Above:** The ghats along River Ganges in Varanasi are decorated with *dias* during the festival of Dev Deepavali, which is celebrated a fortnight after Diwali, and is considered to be the day the gods descend to earth to celebrate the festival of lights





**Left:** Youngsters participate in Milad-un-Nabi or Id-e-Milad in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. Milad-un-Nabi, as it is commonly called, is marked across India by Muslims. The day commemorates the birth of Prophet Muhammad

**Bottom:** A man sells vermicelli outside Nakhoda Masjid at Zakaria Street in Kolkata. Sweets are distributed during Milad-un-Nabi







**Top and bottom:** A Nativity scene on display at St Philomena's Cathedral in Mysuru, Karnataka. Christmas, a Christian festival, is celebrated across India with much enthusiasm. Children lovingly decorate a Christmas tree with various ornaments and trinkets during the festival



# TALE OF THE



Image: Gettyimages



# TRIBES

Explore Nagaland's ethnic culture and tradition at the annual Hornbill Festival

BY NAMITA KUMAR



**Left:** People from the Angami community enjoy a feast during the Hornbill Festival at Kisama

For most of the year, the serene heritage village of Kisama, on the outskirts of Kohima, Nagaland's capital, lies enveloped in a misty silence. With grass and bushes running wild, the cluster of traditional houses may look like any nondescript but pretty village in the hills. It's only when you enter the sprawling complex through a high ceremonial gate that announces "Window to Nagaland" and walk up to each elaborately constructed house (or *morung*), that you realise this is a representational village, keeping the state's rich tribal culture alive.

Tucked into a green mountainside and set against peaks stretching till the horizon, with gigantic white lettering etched high up a mountainside reading "Naga Heritage Village", Kisama comes to life for 10 days in the month of December during the annual Hornbill Festival. From traditional tests of strength, mock wars, dances and music, arts and crafts, and flavours from its kitchens, the festival engages the 16 indigenous tribes of Nagaland with thousands of visitors at the Kisama Heritage Village.

Interestingly, names of both the venue

## The Hornbill Festival showcases the culture and tradition of the 16 tribal communities of Nagaland

and the festival have interesting tales behind them. While Kisama is derived from two villages - Ki from Kigwema and Sa from Phesama - and *ma*, which means village in the local dialect, the festival draws its name from the state bird, the Hornbill, which is revered among residents.

### HISTORY

Launched in 2000 by the state government of Nagaland to revive and reinstate the culture, heritage and history of the state's tribal

population, the Hornbill Festival is one of India's most colourful celebrations of ethnic traditions. Organised by the State Tourism and Art & Culture Department of Nagaland, the festival showcases the state's varied cultural traditions under one roof at Kisama. While Kisama may have shot to fame due to the Hornbill Festival, this region is steeped in history as well. It is located on the historical Kohima-Imphal Road - now a busy highway cutting through the hamlets of Angami tribe and connecting Dimapur with Manipur - once the site of the fiercest of battles fought between the defending British forces and an advancing Japanese Army during World War II.

Every year, the Hornbill Festival starts on December 1, which happens to be the Nagaland Formation Day. In the initial years,



A bird's-eye view of a part of the Kisama village, as members of a Naga tribe perform a traditional dance at the festival

Image: Gettyimages





**Top:** A dance performance being held in front of a *morung* at the Hornbill Festival

**Right:** Ethnic community members take part in a bamboo pole climbing contest at the festival



Image: Gettyimages



the extravaganza used to end on the seventh day but due to heavy tourist in-flow it was extended for another three days.

### LIVING TRADITIONS

During the festival, the entire village complex of Kisama transforms into a colourful patchwork of distinct tribal cultures, with ceremonial dances and mock fights taking place. These 'fights' involve tribal men brandishing spears decorated with beads, shells and tufts of goat hair dyed red; *dao* (an axe-like tool with

a triangular blade) and a shield; and howling traditional war cries. Sometimes, women too join the dance with traditional mock weapons. Most of these performances take place in front of the *morungs*, which can be described as hostels, where youngsters are sent to learn the age-old ways of their tribe. Village elders take it upon themselves to impart the education. *Morungs* are an essential part of Naga life. And even today, almost every village across the state has a functioning *morung*. At the festival ground, the *morungs* are where visitors can interact with

Image: Gettyimages



**Clockwise from left:** Details of a headgear worn by a Kachari tribe member at Hornbill Festival; locals gather inside a *morung* belonging to the Konyak tribe and a close-up of a traditional spear





members of the tribal community, sample their food and watch them practise their rituals and traditions.

But performances are just one side of this festival, which puts on display the heritage and history of Nagaland's tribes through an eclectic assortment of clothing, jewellery and ceremonial objects. On display are a plethora of hand-embroidered and handwoven shawls and ethnic wrap skirts, bracelets, chest and neck ornaments, and elaborate ceremonial headgear.

## CULTURAL JAMBOREE

Extremely popular among tourists from India and abroad, the festival has something

**Top:** Nagaland is an agrarian state and the Hornbill Festival includes performances based on agricultural traditions. Here, women take part in one such performance

**Below:** Tribesmen showcase a mock war dance with armours at the festival

## How to get there

The nearest airport and railway station are in Dimapur.

Dimapur is very well connected to major cities like Delhi, Guwahati and Imphal. From Dimapur, Kohima is 70 km away and it takes about three hours to reach it in a car. Rest assured, you won't get bored – the route is breathtaking!

Kisama Heritage Village, where the Hornbill Festival takes place, is 12 km from Kohima.

## Where to stay

Luxury tents sprout across Kohima and Kisama during the course of the Hornbill Festival. If you're feeling adventurous, you might want to try these out. Keep in mind that temperatures will be icy (drops down to 7° or 8° Celsius) and warm clothing at nights will be a requisite.

## Other things to do

Apart from attending the Hornbill Festival, there are several other interesting places to see in Kohima.

**The Kohima War Cemetery:** Dedicated to around 1,500 British, Commonwealth and Indian soldiers killed in action during WWII, this immaculate cemetery stands at a site that saw intense fighting against the Japanese during the 64-day Battle of Kohima.

**State Museum:** This government-run museum, exhibits tribal artifacts, jewellery and a display of head-hunted skulls. It offers a lot of interesting information about the state's culture and customs.

With inputs from Kalgi Desai

### Take note

Colours, motifs and patterns on shawls and skirts, which differ from one tribe to another, have their own stories to tell. They can be indicators of marital status or accomplishments. Patterns and carvings on traditional Naga weapons, too, differ from tribe to tribe.

The stunning rituals of Konyaks of Mon, the elegant dance moves of Ao women of Mokokchung, the single-stringed musical instrument (*tati*) of Chakhesang Nagas of Phek and Angami Nagas of Kohima - made of dried bottle gourd - and the artistic dance of Zeliangs, are a few highlights of the festival.

The event also showcases indigenous games, herbal medicine stalls, flower exhibitions and sale of handmade craft items. Archery, wrestling contests and fashion shows are also held. There are other unique competitions, like one that involves eating local chillies and climbing tall bamboo poles! The Heritage Complex also houses a World War II Museum, a Bamboo Heritage Hall, a bamboo pavilion, a kids carnival, horti-scape and food courts.

### Tribes of Nagaland

The 16 tribes of the state are: Angami, Rengma, Zeliang, Kuki, Kachari, Chakhesang, Pochury, Chang, Konyak, Ao, Phom, Khamniungam, Yimchungrü, Sangtam, Lotha and Sumi.



Image: Gettyimages



Image: Gettyimages

**Top to bottom:** A man displays the use of a traditional tool; while another enjoys a drink from a local bamboo glass and two participants engage in a bout of wrestling at the festival





Two men in their tribe's traditional attire sit outside their *morung* at Kisama Heritage Village

## Most of the performances at the festival take place in front of the *morungs*, or traditional hostels

to entice every visitor. For music lovers, there are rock concerts and competitions apart from local tribal performances. The latter is a huge draw, not just for the exotic music and dance but also for the unique musical instruments the participants use. Handmade from locally-available resources like bamboos and twigs, these musical instruments are as intriguing to the eye as they are to the ear! The atmosphere becomes electrified, as each tribe steps up to perform, sporting their traditional costume, letting out a war cry or beating the drums, which reverberate through the hills. The International Rock Festival, which mostly caters to a younger audience, is also a popular attraction, with around 20 bands from

across the country, and four from the state, selected to compete, this year. For foodies, there are a variety of interesting options, both in vegetarian and non-vegetarian fare. While non-vegetarians should try the local speciality of snail meat, for vegetarians there is *akibiye* (dish made with colocasia and bamboo shoot) and *hinkejvu* (made with colocasia, shredded cabbage leaves, mustard leaves and beans). At first glance, all the locals seem to be dressed alike – the red and black hues, cowries, beads, coronets and kilts. But a closer look reveals the distinct features of each tribe's ensemble. And they are more than willing to explain their costumes in detail to visitors!

Most importantly, the festival showcases the warmth of the people of Nagaland. As residents open up their homes to accommodate tourists and go out of their way to help them, the Hornbill Festival becomes a stepping stone to explore more of this beautiful state with beautiful people.



# MINSTRELS OF THE DESERT

From songs that celebrate life to those which lament deaths, Rajasthan's folk music has varied colours

BY SHAILAJA KHANNA







Image: Gettyimages

A group of folk musicians of Rajasthan performs under the open sky. Most of the state's folk musicians travel continuously with their families and livestock

**E**very region develops its own type of music based on the terrain and geography of its land. Rajasthan, the land of the arid Thar desert, stark in its landscape, its people hardy, yet wistfully appealing, has developed its own unique style of music over the centuries. The folk music of Rajasthan can be divided into two streams – the music of its regal courts, and that of its wandering tribes.

### **COURT SINGERS**

The famous Maand singers of the royal courts of Bikaner, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Jaipur and Kota in Rajasthan, have had such a universal appeal that their age-old tunes have been incorporated in classical Indian music as an eponymous genre. The Maand Raga has its roots in the folk traditions of Rajasthan. Today the *raga* is a part of the regular repertoire of many classical musicians across the country. More popularly, “*kesariya baalam padhaaro mhare des,*” the traditional welcome folk song sung all over Rajasthan, is an example of *maand* music. Maand musicians belonged to the Kanjar community of the state and along with men, even their womenfolk performed in the courts. The legendary Maand singer of Bikaner, Allah Jilai Bai (1902 to 1992), who sang in the court of maharaja Ganga Singh, is revered even today. It's said that her voice was so powerful that she could throw it to carry forth to an audience of over 5,000 without amplification.

### **TRAVELLING MUSICIANS**

The tribal music of Rajasthan is associated



Image: Gettyimages

### Some musical instruments of Rajasthani music

#### Sarangi

Sarangi is a popular, stringed instrument.

There are various variations of the instrument like Sindhi sarangi, *Gujratan* sarangi and the *jogiya* sarangi among others.

#### Algoza

This is a type of flute from Tonk-Ajmer districts of the state and is used extensively.

#### Kamaicha

The 17-stringed *kamaicha* is a bowed instrument. Made of mango wood, its rounded resonator is covered with goat skin.

#### Khartaal

The *khartaal* is a kind of castanet made of teak. Its name is derived from “*khar*”, meaning hand, and “*taal*”, meaning rhythm.

#### Dholak

The *dholak* is a kind of drum.

most strongly and popularly with two tribes of the state - the Manganiyars and the Langas, who have interwoven lament and brisk rhythms into their music over centuries. These wandering tribes are hereditary professional musicians and their art has been traditionally patronised by wealthy merchants of the region. Their music is based on classical *ragas* and thus suited to all occasions associated with life and even death. While singers from both the tribes sing in the same dialect, their styles differ. Interestingly, though both communities are made up of Muslim musicians, many of their songs are in praise of Hindu deities and are sung during Hindu festivals.

Manganiyar musicians have traditionally been associated with Rajput rulers, thus, invoke Lord Krishna before their performance. Historically, they accompanied their king to war and sang before the battle began and even after it, to lament deaths. Later, as the kingdoms

ceased to exist, the musicians became attached to wealthy families and were called upon to sing on festivals and to celebrate child-births, marriages and even during deaths to lament, sharing very strong bonds with the family. Says Bhutte Khan, a well-known Manganiyar artist: “Though we travel extensively, we are bound by localities and regions and our *jajmaans* (patrons) are fixed. We are like a part of the family of our *jajmaan*. We celebrate with and for him on every occasion. It’s like a division of labour – they protect and earn, we serve them through our music. We are called upon not only on joyous occasions but even when a family member dies. We maintain the traditional oral rites of passing away of life.”

On the other hand, Langas, meaning “song givers” are traditionally poets, other than being musicians. Belonging to the Barmer district of Rajasthan, it is said Langas converted from Hinduism to Islam in the 17th century and their



Image: Gettyimages

Bhanwari Devi, a very popular name in the world of Rajasthani folk music, sings in traditional Bhopa style at the Edinburgh International Festival a few years ago





Image: Gettyimages

A Langa dancer performs at a fair in Desuri, Rajasthan

## Manganiyar musicians have traditionally been associated with Rajput rulers, thus, invoke Lord Krishna before their performance

musicians were not allowed to use percussion instruments. Maybe a reason why, the Sindhi *sarangi* and the *algoza* (flute) are the only two instruments that accompany their music. Their repertoire has strong Islamic influences. These musicians also sang during the time of sowing and harvesting of crops, with compositions describing the acts and praying for success. The onset of seasons, especially monsoon, too inspired music.

### DIVINE MUSIC

Another form of tribal folk music of Rajasthan is that of the Bhopas. Also known as singing

priests, Bhopas worship Pabuji, a guardian of livestock. The tradition of worship involves a liturgical narration of the epic called the *Pabuprakasa*, which glorifies Pabuji as a divine being. The Rabari nomads, who rear camels, cattle and goats — and who were once the staple audience of the Bhopas — could not visit a temple in a fixed place. Therefore, the Bhopas would travel to where the nomads set up camp and perform. They carried with them the *phad*, or *par*, a scroll of cloth on which were painted miniature scenes of epics and legends.

Today, Rajasthan's folk musicians travel across the country and internationally to present their music. As traditional performance venues become obsolete, these musicians keep their traditions alive by participating in music festivals across India and the world. Several Rajasthani folk artistes like Bhanwari Devi have also been part of contemporary music experiments.









# BEYOND LITTI CHOKHA

Bhojpuri cuisine isn't just about the food culture of a certain part of Bihar, but a chapter that tracks the evolution of the food ecosystem of the region around Patna, Uttar Pradesh and parts of Odisha as well

BY MADHULIKA DASH

**P**art Nepali, part Awadhi and part from Buxar, Bhojpuri cuisine to Bihar is what Nizami food is to Hyderabad. It's a fascinating blend of the new and the old and the innovative.

Unique dishes like *parwal ki mithai* (a dessert of pointed gourd) and popular ones like *litti chokha* (baked wheat flour balls filled with spicy roasted gram flour served with a vegetable roast) are said to have originated in the ancient city of Buxar, which was once considered to be the culinary capital of Bihar.

In fact, this medieval cuisine showcases not only the engrossing food evolution of the region but also the rich culture of the erstwhile state of Bhojpur. After all, it doesn't only include some of the iconic dishes that describe the culinary legacy of Bihar, like *thekua* (wheat flour cookies), *besan chila* (savoury pancake made from gram flour), *makhane ka kheer* (dessert made of fox nuts, sugar and milk) and *sattu ka paratha* (shallow fried Indian flatbread stuffed with a spicy mix of roasted gram flour), but also how different influences shaped the food in the

*Baigan ka chokha* (roasted aubergine mashed and garnished) with *roti* (flatbread)





**Top:** Bihar is famous for kebabs like *boti kebab*

**Left:** *Makhane ka kheer* (milk-based dessert made with fox nuts)



region that is known to have produced some of the best brains in administration and business.

Take the Bihari *boti kebab* for instance. One of the highlights of a Bhojpuri (or Bihari) meal, this interesting preparation is a close kin of the kebab, which was popularised by Turkish soldiers during the 11th and 12th centuries, and still follows a rustic style of preparation. Yet, when it comes to taste, it can rival the royal versions created under the Awadhi rule. Another dish that has a fascinating story is the meat preparation – Madhubani chicken curry. An outstanding showpiece of the ancient culinary technique of *bhunja* (slow cooking of onion and spices), this dish, which food historians believe was originally prepared with mutton, is known for its unique sweet and spicy flavour. Yet another example of the ancient, subtle style of cooking that became an integral part of the Bhojpuri food culture is the fried *machili* (fish). Inspired by Nepali cuisine, this recipe from the

## This medieval cuisine showcases the engrossing food evolution of the region with influences from neighbouring Nepal

Maithil region of the state is popular not only for its interesting flavour but also for its unique style of tempering. The dish, says chef Gautam Kumar (executive chef, Country Inn & Suites by Radisson), who has been documenting Bhojpuri cuisine, “follows the ancient practice of marinating the fish with turmeric, sea salt and then shallow frying it till it’s crisp on the outside. It’s then tempered with *paanch phoran* (a mix of five whole spices) and garlic in mustard oil.” It is, in fact, explains the chef, “a dish that predates Awadhi cuisine, and offers a glimpse into the cooking technique of that era.”

**Left to Right:** The popular *malpua* and *litti*. The latter is a common street food in this region





## One of the hallmarks of a good Bhojpuri meal is the inclusion of *chokha*, a mashed roasted vegetable dish

The other dish that showcases the pre-Awadh and Mughal era influences on this cuisine is *pitha* (a form of dumplings). Legend has it that *pithas* were first developed by the Brahmins of Mithila to enjoy their savouries and sweets in one bite. Many believe that the shape of a *pitha* is inspired by Nepal's momo. Made in two forms – the savoury, seasoned with ginger and green chilli, and the sweet version with *alsi* (flax seed) and sugar – they are both a snack and a breakfast treat, which are popular during festivals. Among the savoury versions, the most popular is *dal pitha*, which is made with rice flour paste and stuffed with a steamed lentil mix. It can be either fried, or steamed and then fried.

The popular *malpua*, a Holi special dessert in the region, is yet another interesting dish that may have been inspired by *pitha*. It is a dish that the Mughals easily adopted. Many believe that even the British favoured the *malpua* as it resembled maple syrup pancakes.

Another interesting dish is the *thekua*, which experts say, has Nepali influence. A must-have during the festival of Chhath, this crisp and crunchy, sweet dish is said to have been influenced by both *arisa pitha* of Odisha and *sel roti* from Nepal. Traditionally made of jaggery and wheat flour, this has remained a classic, with perhaps the inclusion of fennel, which many believe was because of the Mughal rule in Bihar. In this dish, wheat flour and sugar or jaggery are mixed to form small cakes and then deep fried.

Sweets aside, one of the hallmarks of a good Bhojpuri meal is the inclusion of *chokha*, a mashed dish of roasted vegetables. A good



**Top:** *Khaja*, a deep-fried, layered sweetmeat, is popular in the region. Below: India has a variety of *mithais*, or sweets, that are best savoured during winter; **Above:** A man sells various types of sweetmeats at a fair in Sonpur near Patna





**Clockwise from left:** Fish in mustard curry; a mutton curry and a flavourful jack fruit curry from Bhojpuri cuisine



Bhojpuri meal, in fact, is known by the use of seasonal produce, which showcases itself in form of a *chokha*. Today, this dish is gaining popularity as the health-conscious generation is discovering the wholesome goodness of roasted vegetables.

Almost every tender, seasonal vegetable has a *chokha* recipe. And if it grows in abundance, like the pointed gourd and jack fruit, then it also has a sweet version. Case in point is the famous *parwal ki mithai*, in which pointed gourd is

stuffed with reduced milk solids and dry fruits, and then dipped in a sugar syrup. In addition to this are the dal or lentil dishes, which have their own unique innovations. Like the *chana saag*, which is a winter essential, this dish uses green gram and its tender leaves to make a curry that is minimally-spiced.

Other unique dishes from this region are the Mughal-influenced *kathal ki tarkari* (jack fruit curry) and *kathal ki biryani* (a rice and jack fruit dish), which many believe were born around the same time when Awadhi cuisine was developing in Lucknow, as they have the same subtle yet vibrant taste. But neither of the dishes was created as an alternative to their meat peers. These were more of a diplomatic tool, which was best showcased by the ruler of Bengal on his table.

## **The British loved the Bihari *malpua* as it resembled maple syrup pancakes**

# THE REEL DEAL

India's biggest celebration of cinema returned to Goa's capital, Panaji for its 49th edition. The festival saw, in attendance, some of the biggest stars coming together to honour the miracles of the celluloid

BY FAIZAL KHAN

In an interview, in 2006, to *Time* magazine, Oscar award-winning director Steven Spielberg had said, "I feel there is no substitute for going out to the movies. There is nothing like it." More than a decade later, the statement still holds true, especially in India, where movies are not just made, viewed and applauded but celebrated!

Several national and international film festivals are held across the country throughout the year, but none compares to the fervour with which the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) is celebrated in Goa. During this nine-day event, filmmakers and actors from India and around the world come together to honour and mark the best works in celluloid. The recently-concluded 49th edition of the festival, that ran from November 20 to 28, was no different. In fact, the festival drew thousands of delegates from across the world to Goa's capital,

The venue of the International Film Festival of India, which was held in 2016







Panaji, underlining India's status as the largest film-making country in the world with over a 1,000 movies made every year.

"India is a land of storytellers where every person has a story to tell," Union Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting, Col Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, said while opening the festival in a glittering ceremony in Panaji. "These stories inspire and entertain us. IFFI is a platform for our young generation to showcase their talent. It is a platform for international filmmakers to see the diversity of Indian cinema and explore the talent that we have," he added.

## This year, the festival celebrated the birth centenary of Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman

### CONNECTING CULTURES

Maintaining the festival's tradition of connecting cultures, Israel was the Country of Focus this year. Ten Israeli films, including the country's Oscar entries for Best Foreign Language Film such as *Footnote* and *Waltz with Bashir*, were screened at the festival, which also honoured Israeli director Dan Wolman with the Lifetime Achievement Award. "There is chemistry between India and Israel, which I hope manifests in co-productions and collaborations in cinema," said Wolman while receiving the award.

The festival was an ideal platform for both countries, who had signed a co-production agreement on cinema in January 2018, during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's state visit to India, to continue their collaboration in the cultural arena. Osnat Bukofzer, from the Tel Aviv-based Rabinovich







Image: Gettyimages

**Above:** Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman (left)

**Facing page:** Israeli director Dan Wolman (third from left) being honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 49th IFFI

Foundation for Art's International Relations department, held talks with Indian producer Suraj Kumar, CEO of New Delhi-based Johnsons-Suraj Films International. "We have begun talks and look forward to take the co-production project forward," says Bukofzer, who was a part of the Israeli film delegation to IFFI, Goa. The co-production agreement, which came into effect in September 2018, includes initiatives by Israel in expediting visas for visiting film crew, granting financial aid and exempting tax for Indian productions.

"It will be a remarkable opportunity to open the gates of collaboration between Indian and Israeli filmmakers and producers," says Kumar, who co-produced the Indian-Argentinian feature film, *Thinking of Him*. Kumar's co-production project with Israel is inspired by India's former ambassador to the United States, Navtej Sarna's novel, *Indians at Herod's Gate - A Jerusalem Tale*. The book of



The festival is considered one of the most influential film festivals in Asia. The next edition will be the 50th and everybody is planning big for it.

**SAIBAL CHATTERJEE**

National Award-winning film critic

”

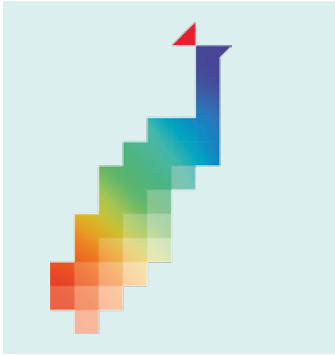


I dedicate this award [for exceptional contribution to Indian cinema] to Indore, my birthplace and Mumbai, my workplace.

**Salim Khan**  
Indian Actor

”

## Memory Lane



- The 49th edition of the festival screened 212 films from 68 countries.
- Veteran screenwriter Salim Khan was honoured for his lifetime contribution to Indian cinema at the festival.
- Jharkhand was the state in focus this year and films such as *A Death in the Gunj*, *Ranchi Diaries* and *Panchlet*, which were picturised in the region, were screened.
- Movie buffs were also provided an opportunity to acquaint themselves with Tunisian cinema through an 'in-conversation' session by Tunisian ambassador and filmmaker Nacer Khemir.
- Ukrainian director Sergei Loznitsa's film *Donbass* won the most prestigious award of the festival, Golden Peacock. Indian director Lijo Jose Pellissery scored a Silver Peacock for Best Direction for *Ee Maa Yau*.
- The Centenary Award for Best Debut Film of a Director was given to Alberto Monteras II for *Respeto* (Filipino).
- This year, the film festival paid homage to late actors Shashi Kapoor, Sridevi and late filmmaker Kalpana Lajmi.

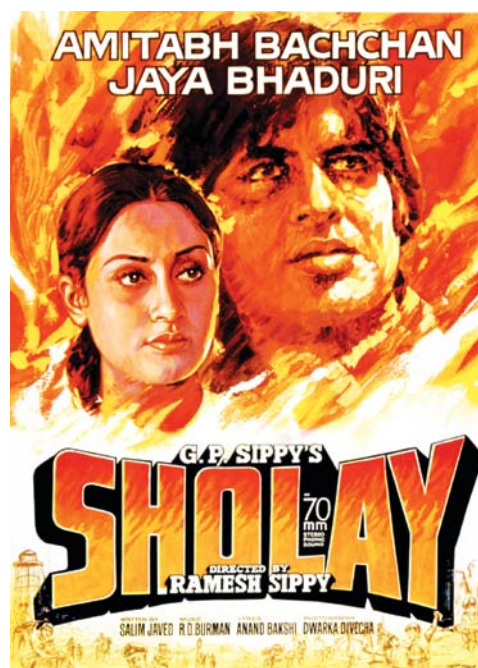
Special audio-descriptive version of movies such as *Sholay* and *Hichki* were screened for visually-impaired children at the festival

Sarna, a former Ambassador to Israel, tells the story of an Indian hospice set up centuries ago in Jerusalem.

### INFLUENTIAL FESTIVAL

Following close on the heels of India's achievements at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta, Indonesia, where the country won 60 medals, IFFI scheduled a special section on biopics that honour its sport legends. The open-air screening of these films was also an extension of the Khelo India Campaign, the national programme for development of sports. The six biopics that were shown in the festival included *Gold*, which traced Indian hockey team's 1948 Olympic win; *Mary Kom*, based on the Manipuri boxer's resilient journey to success and *MS Dhoni – The Untold Story*, that portrayed the life and struggles of the former captain of the Indian cricket team.

"IFFI is an important festival in the







The closing ceremony saw a star-studded performance from some of the biggest names in the Indian film industry

## The 49th edition of the festival also screened movies based on Indian sport legends

international film festival calendar,” says Assamese filmmaker Utpal Borpujari, whose debut feature *Ishu* won the Best Assamese Film National Award in 2018. “It has a lot of history behind it,” added Borpujari, a member of the preview committee that selected the international films for the festival. “For young filmmakers, it is a great window to know what is happening in the artistic and technological areas,” says the filmmaker, who moderated a masterclass by National Award-winning editor Sreekar Prasad.

## PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY

This year, the festival also celebrated the birth centenary of Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman under a section titled Retrospective of the Masters, which showcased seven of his best films including *Wild Strawberries*, *Summer With Monika*, *The Seventh Seal*, *Persona* and *Autumn Sonata*.

Not just that, the festival also organised a special section where audio-descriptive movies were screened for visually impaired children to let them experience the wonders of the celluloid. Created in collaboration with UNESCO and New Delhi-based NGO Saksham, the section took the Accessible India Campaign further. Movies such as *Sholay* and *Hichki* were screened under this section.

# HIGH ON ART

India Art Fair, the annual art juggernaut held in New Delhi, continues to generate enthusiasm and optimism among exhibitors. As its 2019 edition unfolds, we look at what the event holds in store and how it has kept the focus on Indian art

BY POONAM GOEL



Malaysia-based artist Anne Samat's work titled *Goddess of Love*, displayed at the India Art Fair last year, was made with daily-use objects such as PVC chains, fashion accessories, kitchen and garden utensils and stationery items

It's that time of the year when the art fraternity across India goes into an overdrive, with the Kochi Biennale, Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa and India Art Fair (IAF) in New Delhi – all happening almost at the same time. It is the India Art Fair, however, that most art aficionados have their eyes upon, especially since its directorship changed hands a year ago. For the 11th edition of the fair starting on January 31, 2019, in New Delhi, its new director Jagdip Jagpal has roped in a number of noted galleries for the first time. Even though it might still be early to gauge how the fair would stand out qualitatively under her leadership, enthusiasm among participating galleries bodes good times for Indian art.

"I feel that Jagpal brings in a vast arsenal of international experience," says Tuntty Chauhan, director, Gallery Threshold, New Delhi, "Also, the team is being more discerning in sifting through the galleries and that has definitely taken the standard of the fair a notch higher."

## THE JOURNEY

Agrees Parul Vadehra, director of the New Delhi-based Vadehra Art Gallery, "India Art Fair has come a long way since we participated in the first India Art Summit, as it was called then. Many reputed international museum groups have started attending as have collectors





A visitor admires Bengaluru-based artist Avinash Veeraghavan's installation titled *Dwell in Possibility* exhibited in the art fair in 2017

from India and abroad.” The confidence in the fair is reflected in the fact that most galleries continue to bring forth their regular collection of artists and artworks. Vadehra, for instance, is once again banking on names such as SH Raza, and Rameshar Broota among the seniors, while also showcasing contemporary artists such as Atul Dodiya, Shilpa Gupta and Jagannath Panda.

One of the regular participants in the fair since its inception, Geetha Mehra of Sakshi Gallery, also believes that the “general planning and layout has definitely improved and the focus is the fair itself and not all the add-ons”.

**For the 2019 edition of the India Art Fair, director Jagdip Jagpal has roped in a number of noted galleries for the first time**

Mehra has also chosen to showcase the regular stars of her gallery such as Shine Shivan, Rekha Rodwittiya, Surendran Nair and Schon Mendes.

It is no wonder, that despite constant murmurs of a continued slowdown in the art market globally, the fair is still being seen as one of the most important events in the Indian art calendar.

### **CURRENT SCENARIO**

At the 2019 edition to be held at NSIC Exhibition Ground in New Delhi, there will be 75 exhibitors from India and the world, including top-notch names from the country such as Jhaveri Contemporary, Galerie Isa and Chemould Prescott (all from Mumbai), and New Delhi-based galleries like Nature Morte and Gallerieske, among others. International galleries participating in India Art Fair for the first time will include Neugerriemschneider (Berlin, Germany) and Sokyō Gallery (Kyoto,



Japan). Galleries which will be returning to the event include Blain|Southern (Berlin and London), New York-based Aicon Gallery and Arario Gallery from Korea.

### SPREADING AWARENESS

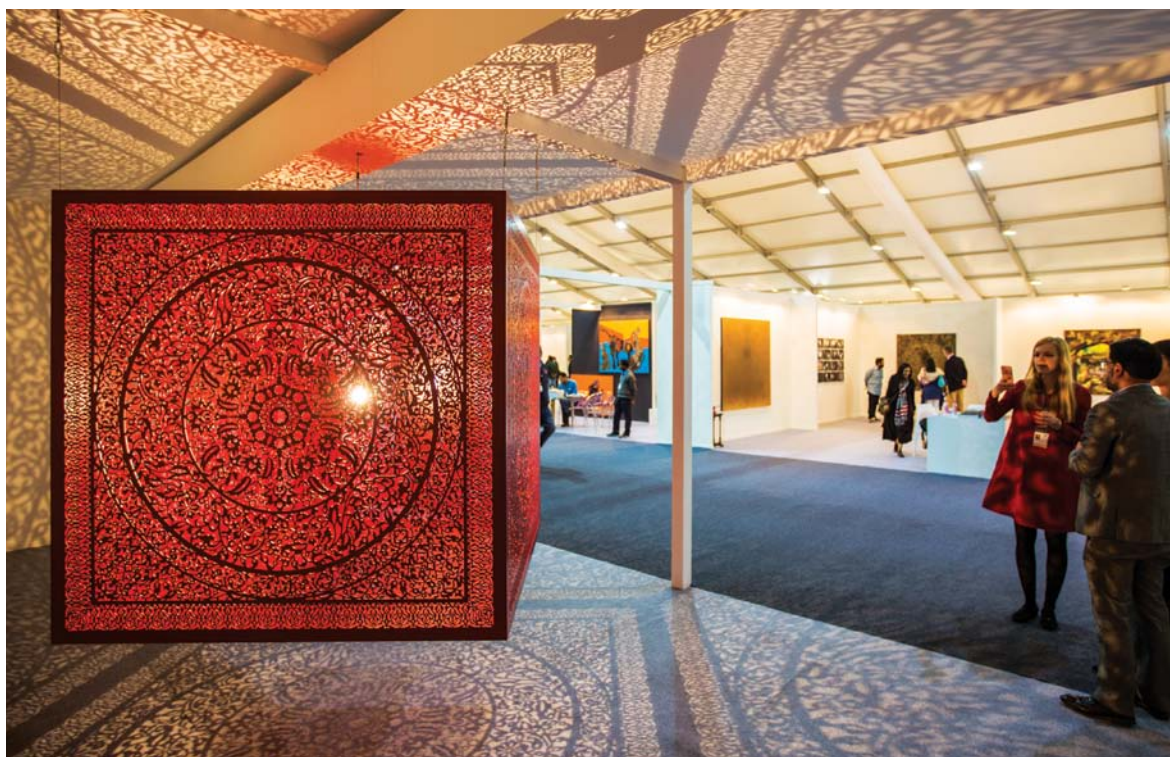
Outside the fair grounds, a new initiative, IAF Parallel, will see collateral events organised by galleries, museums and art spaces being held in venues across New Delhi. Highlights from IAF Parallel will include contemporary artist Bharti Kher's solo exhibition at New Delhi's Bikaner House, a show dedicated to artist Upendra Maharathi at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Arpita Singh's retrospective at Kiran

Nadar Museum of Art, a special exhibition by Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art at the Indira Gandhi National Centre of the Arts and walkthroughs in Lado Sarai, a contemporary arts hub in South Delhi. Studio Art will bring Pakistani artist Khalil Chishtee's solo show to the Bikaner House.

### FOCUS ON EMERGING TALENT

Some gallerists like Shobha Bhatia of Gallerie Ganesha, a capital-based gallery, believe that the fair is not only just about showcasing works by prominent artists. She herself has never shied away from showing upcoming names like Devdatta Padekar, Avijit Dutta and Neelkant Chowdhury. "We always find buyers for younger names, as finally it is talent and quality that gets attention," she says and adds, "In this edition as well, our theme is about traditional and folk art. As opposed to contemporary art which is more conceptual in nature, our exhibits are more symbolic and soulful."

**More than 70 exhibitors from 24 Indian and international cities will participate in the fair in 2019**



A shadow sculpture by Pakistani-American artist Anila Quayyum Agha was a crowd-puller in 2017. The red cube was cut in floral patterns and illuminated from the inside. Shadows were cast on visitors as they moved past the display





**Top:** A group of foreign visitors at the Brazil-based Galeria Karla Osorio 2018. Curated walks are conducted during the event. **Bottom:** For his work titled *1000 Attempts At A Reconciliation*, Korean-American artist Timothy Hyunsoo Lee transferred 1,000 sheets of 24-karat gold leaf onto a surface



Also, over the years, more and more galleries are choosing to present solo shows. In 2019, there will be more solos than before - while Pakistani artist Aisha Khalid's work will be exhibited by Anant Art, Sumakshi Singh's art will be presented by Exhibit 320. A project by artist Madhusudhanan will be hosted by Vadehra Art Gallery in the capital.

Amid all the talk of the commercials of the art world, enthusiasts feel the event also helps keep the focus on art education. Ashna Singh, of Studio Art, says that for Indian art to find its way into every home, there needs to be a greater emphasis on art education, which this fair helps sustain. Adding, "There is immense talent in our country, and for that to find its way into all segments of society, there has to be awareness. While the India Art Fair has come a long way in promoting knowledge about art and art heritage, we need more efforts. The government along with the corporate sector will have to help in creating awareness."



Image: Gettyimages



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# THE TIGER'S LEAP

He doesn't have a swagger, nor the flamboyance associated with star footballers. But with his professionalism and dedication, Sunil Chhetri has spearheaded the resurrection of the Indian football team, affectionately called the Blue Tigers

BY VINAYAK SURYA SWAMI

**H**e may have the face of a teenager and standing at just 1.70 m, may be mistaken for one too, but place him with a ball in front of a goalpost and you will know what miracles this little man is capable of. Often hailed as India's "Mr Football", Sunil Chhetri's rise to being the most capped player of India and the captain of the national team from a school league player in New Delhi, tells the story of how consistent efforts and perseverance can change the face of a sport for an entire country.

## THE CHANGE

Over the last 15 years, much has changed for Indian football. From long queues that form outside stadiums for every match to a competitive domestic circuit, the football community in India finally seems to be heading in the right direction. But, scientifically speaking, change is something that always requires an anomaly, an occurrence and a catalyst to provide the much-needed impetus. For a nation madly in love with cricket, all of that was embodied by Chhetri, the young winger-striker. The Arjuna Award winner says that the biggest break came for him when he started to play for the legendary Mohun Bagan

club in Kolkata, the hotbed of Indian football.

Looking back, he often recalls that when he had arrived at Mohun Bagan, in a loose t-shirt and baggy jeans, no one took much notice. But his performance with the reserves quickly got him promoted to the main team. His attitude and curiosity got him noticed and his dedication to the game helped him secure his position in the squad. From then on, he has never looked back and kept his focus on becoming a better player and improving his tactics with every shot that he took. His seniors at Mohun Bagan and Indian legendary footballer Bhaichung Bhutia, who is also the former captain of the Indian football team, lovingly coached him both on and off the field and abstractedly fuelled the rise of a star destined to redefine football for the nation. Chhetri has often said that at Mohun Bagan, he would only concentrate on the game as "the seniors would handle the pressure of the media and fans". In fact, last year, Chhetri's

**In 2010, with Kansas City Wizards, Chhetri became the third Indian ever to play for a foreign club**



We played together for eight years. Football in the country has improved because we now have players like him

**Renedy Singh**  
Former Indian captain

”

#### Chhetri's dynamic digits

- 65** International goals
- 104** International caps
- 120** goals on the domestic circuit
- 247** appearances in total
- 48** goals and
- 105** appearances for Bengaluru FC
- 1.35** million Twitter followers

#### Current world record holders

- Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal)
- 85** goals in **154** matches
- Sunil Chhetri (India)
- 67** goals in **105** matches
- Lionel Messi (Argentina)
- 65** goals in **128** matches
- Neymar Jr (Brazil)
- 60** goals in **95** matches
- David Villa (Spain)
- 59** goals in **98** Matches

hero, Bhutia, acknowledged his prodigy's talent on the field. As Chhetri made his 100th international appearance for India at the Mumbai Football Arena in a match between India and Kenya, Bhutia and fellow sport legend IM Vijayan paid tribute to the young player by sporting jerseys flashing the ace forward's name. He was handed the captain's armband for the first time in 2012 by Bhutia, and it has stayed with him ever since.

#### THE PLAYER

As experts and fans laud his performance, the humble Chhetri refutes that he possesses the magical touch, defined as the link connecting a player's mind, body and soul to the checkered ball that he dribbles with his feet. In his polite manner, he says, "I just play the game I love. And I follow a very strict fitness regime, especially after turning 30." Probably why he still looks like a teenager, fresh off the bench, even when he is 34 and has been playing football for the last 18 years. He has always maintained that he wanted to become a player "who is reliable, and not somebody who just does a cameo or scores a goal here and there".

**Below left:** Sunil Chhetri thanks his fans for their support with his trademark humility

**Below right:** Bhaichung Bhutia was the captain under whom Chhetri matured as a player and learnt the nitty-gritty of captaining the national team



Image: Gettyimages







Image: Gettyimages

The fans of Indian football have grown exponentially over the years, they are now affectionately called The Blue Pilgrims

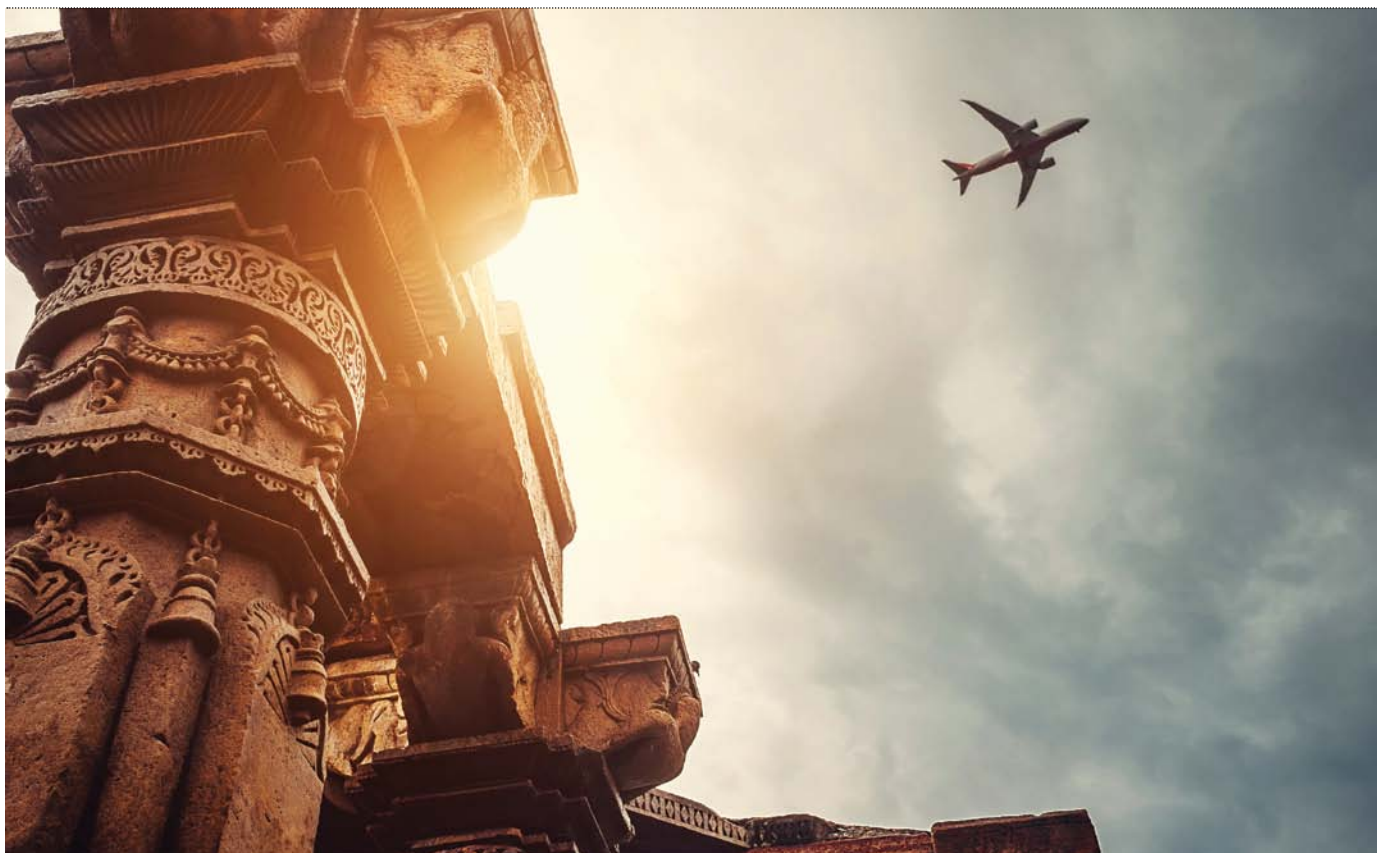
Over the years, Chhetri has spotted the right opportunities and played some of the biggest clubs in the country like JCT, East Bengal, Dempo, Chirag United and Mohun Bagan. He was selected by Kansas City Wizards in the MLS (Major League Soccer), the American professional football league on March 24, 2010, making him the third Indian to play for a foreign club. However, the player felt home at the Bengaluru FC and has been associated with the club since 2015.

Chhetri believes that there is a higher level which can be achieved with more experience and hard work and for the same reason many now see him as the perfect ambassador for the sport in India. He exemplified that belief

when he played in his 100th international game scoring his 61st goal, which made the Indian captain, the third-highest goal-scorer in the world, placing him amongst global icons like Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi.

He has made his way through some of the hardest times in Indian football and has retained his trademark humility. Upon reaching the milestone that every player dreams of, he says that it is imperative that the fans understand their importance when it comes to creating interest for the sport. Even today, he is always flanked by young players from the Bengaluru FC or the Indian team, who bombard him with questions on probable strategies but are never turned away without a solution and a follow-up question. When asked about his plans for the future he playfully remarks that he's only 34 and has at least 34 years of spectacular football in him! And we can only hope that we keep applauding the demure Chhetri as he enters the field and greets his fans with folded hands!

**Chhetri was handed the captain's armband in 2012 by Bhutia and it has stayed with him ever since**



# TAKE FLIGHT

India is on the cusp of an aviation revolution. With the number of fliers increasing every year, the country is developing world-class airports to meet the growing demand. The new infrastructure is also boosting the socio-economic development of nearby areas

BY NB RAO

It has been a phenomenal take-off for the Indian civil aviation sector, with the domestic passenger traffic clocking double-digit growth for the past 50 months, without a break. According to the latest data released in December 2018 by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), India's domestic passenger traffic soared by 15 per cent in October as compared to the same month in 2017.

IATA's comprehensive report on India's civil aviation market projects tremendous potential for continued high-speed growth for the sector over the coming years. While in 2010, around eight crore people travelled "to/from/ or within India," by 2017 that doubled to 16 crore. By 2037, the number is expected to treble to 52 crore, says IATA. Air transport makes a significant economic contribution to India – it supports 75 lakh jobs (390,000 directly, 570,000 in the value chain, and 6.2 million in tourism). Aviation contributes about USD 30 billion annually to India's GDP.



IATA estimates that of the 359 million additional passengers expected to fly by 2036, 228 million will be on domestic routes. And by 2026, India is expected to be the third-largest air transport market in the world, up from its current ranking of seventh.

With such dramatic changes occurring on the civil aviation front, the Government of India is focussed on developing state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities through airports and heliports to ensure smooth operations for airlines and excellent services for the passengers.

At least 30 new airports are expected to become operational in 2019, adding to the list of over 100 existing airports. Besides this, many new helipads will also be developed to ensure services under the UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) scheme. We look at three such new and upgraded airports in India, which are set to make flying easier, and also at how these airports are affecting the socio-economic development of these regions.

### **PAKYONG AIRPORT, SIKKIM**

Located 30 km from Sikkim's capital Gangtok, the state's first airport is nothing less than an engineering marvel. Situated atop a hill at a staggering height of 4,590 feet, the airport is located above Pakyong village. Built at a cost of over INR 553.53 crore, it is an architectural feat. The 1.7-km-long, 30-m-wide runway was made after building a massive embankment. Besides, the soil reinforcement and slope stabilisation techniques used to build this airport are unique and the apron can accommodate ATR-72 aircraft.

Owned and operated by the Airports Authority of India (AAI), Pakyong's strategic location makes it a crucial element in India's strategic plans. The airport is just 70 km away from China border, and the Air Force can land most of its aircraft here. The 3,200-sq-m terminal is set amidst stunning Himalayan mountains, which makes for a visually compelling sight. The airport makes Sikkim - renowned for its landscapes - even more

The Pakyong airport, near Sikkim's capital Gangtok, has a 1.7-km-long and 30-m-wide runway



## Advantage India

### Indian Airport Analysis

Latest Update: November, 2018

#### Robust Demand

Rise in working group and middle class demography will effect the demand positively. India is expected to become third largest aviation market in terms of passengers by 2024\*.

#### Opportunities in MRO

Expenditure in MRO accounts for 13-15 per cent of total revenues; it is the second-highest expense after fuel cost. By 2020, the MRO industry is likely to grow over US\$ 1.5 billion.

#### Policy Support

Foreign investment up to 49 per cent is allowed under automatic route in scheduled air transport service, regional air transport service and domestic scheduled passenger airline.

#### Increasing Investments

Aviation industry in India is expected to witness 1 lakh crore (US\$ 15.52 billion) worth of investments in the next five years.

Note: MRO –Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul, \*As per International Air Transport Association (IATA) forecasts

## Money matters

Airports Authority of India is going to invest INR 15,000 crore in 2018-19 for expanding existing terminals and constructing 15 new ones. It has opened the airport sector to private participation, and six airports across major cities are being developed under the PPP model. The AAI aims to bring around 250 airports under operation across the country by 2020. Investments to the tune of INR 420-450 are expected in India's airport infrastructure between FY18-23.

India Brand Equity Foundation

accessible to tourists. About 15 lakh tourists visited Sikkim in 2017-18, mostly from West Bengal. The NH 10, the 125-km-long highway that connects Sikkim and West Bengal, is often blocked by landslides and the traffic congestion leads to long delays. Travel industry insiders are also looking forward to tourists arriving in Sikkim during monsoons, a time that sees a dip in tourism here. "Tourists can directly fly in and out of Sikkim, without having to use the highways. The airport will also bring in tourists who are not comfortable with long road journeys," says a tour operator from the region. The airport is also expected to attract chartered flights bringing in affluent tourists.

## JHARSUGUDA AIRPORT, ODISHA

Odisha's second airport, Jharsuguda Airport, was recently inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Developed by the AAI, in collaboration with the Odisha government, the airport is said to go a long way towards the development of the state. The Prime





**Facing page:** The 2,380-sq-m terminal at Sikkim's first airport is set amidst stunning Himalayan mountains. Its 80-m-high reinforcement wall is one of the tallest in the world

**Right:** The Jharsuguda airport in Odisha is equipped to handle A 320 aircraft



## In India, the last three years have seen strong passenger growth in the domestic sector, touching 100 million in 2017

Minister, while inaugurating the airport said, "The second airport in the state would act as a lifeline in the western region of Odisha and attract investors to the mineral-rich region."

Built over almost 1,000 acre, Jharsuguda is also one of the greenest airports in the country. It was built with eco-friendly, locally sourced materials, and it has a rainwater harvesting system and a solar power system. Interestingly, Jharsuguda had a British-era airport built during World War II. After Independence, it was used on and off but not as a commercial airport. In 1998, when the control tower building was damaged, the airport stopped operations completely. But as the mining belt flourished and Jharsuguda became a thriving industrial hub, demands started pouring in for re-developing the airport. The state

government contributed INR 75 crore of the total expenditure of INR 210 crore, and the Veer Surendra Sai Airport was inaugurated on September 22, 2018.

The 4,000-sq-m airport has been developed for all weather operations for A-320 type of aircraft. Apart from the terminal building, the airport infrastructure also includes an isolation bay, new terminal block-cum-control tower, fire station and essential navigation aids.

Another major project taken up by the AAI recently is the upgrading of the Jabalpur airport in Madhya Pradesh at a cost of INR 413 crore, with enhanced peak hour handling capacity of 500 passengers from the existing 150. The proposed terminal building, sprawled across 9,350 sq m will offer world-class facilities, besides glimpses of vibrant tribal art, local handicrafts, murals and popular tourist destinations of the state. The huge investments being made in developing new airports or improving facilities at existing airports will not only ensure a greater flow of tourists, business and other visitors, but it is also expected to boost investment in-flows into many of the backward areas of the country.

# THE WORLD REMEMBERS BAPU

On the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary, the Government of India has planned a year-long celebration

**R**enowned theoretical physicist Albert Einstein had once said of Mahatma Gandhi, "Generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe that such a man as this one ever in flesh and blood walked upon this Earth."

Bapu, as the Mahatma is fondly called, was one of the main protagonists of India's freedom struggle. He was a firm believer in non-violence and took the same approach in his fight for independence. The Mahatma not

only strived for political freedom but also for a self-sustaining nation with a society free of prejudices against caste, religion, economic stature and gender.

October 2, 2018, marked the start of the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Mahatma's birth. And to commemorate the event, the Indian government has planned a year-long programme, including various events propagating his message of peace, humility and acceptance. Celebrations are being held in



Screengrabs from the video of the *Vaishnav janm toh* medley





A glimpse of the LED video projected at London's Piccadilly Circus

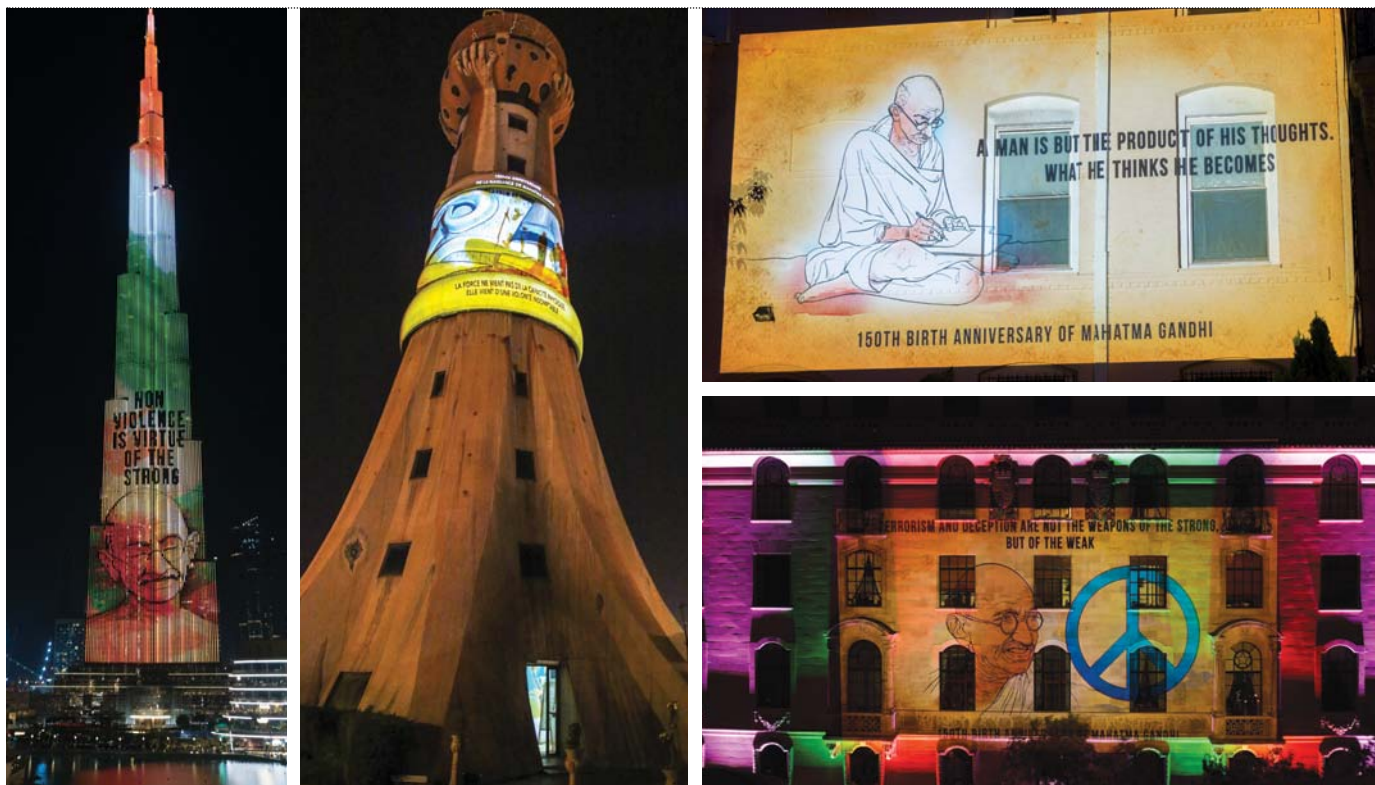
India and in countries across the world - from screenings of films based on Bapu to “health drives” across the country and street plays depicting the Mahatma’s philosophies.

### MUSICALLY ONE

One of the highlights of the celebrations is a musical medley that pays homage to the Mahatma through his favourite *bhajan*, *Vaishnav jan to tene kahiye*. Artistes from over 150 countries rendered their voices for the hymn. The five-minute video that features a musical medley of the hymn sung by artistes from select countries was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the closing ceremony of the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Conference on October 2, 2018. It was launched in the presence of secretary general of the United Nations, Antonio Gutierrez; minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj and minister of Drinking Water and Sanitation Uma Bharti among other prominent personalities. Artistes from over 155 countries have participated in the initiative.

## An LED video that was projected on iconic buildings around the world highlighted Bapu’s life and message

Indian missions and embassies abroad had identified performers from their respective countries to render the *bhajan* in Gujarati for the medley. Different regions and countries recognised by the United Nations had sent in video clips, which were then put together in the fusion video. The result was an eclectic, colourful and rich rendition of the hymn infused with the local flavour of various regions. From Armenia to Angola, Sri Lanka to Serbia and Iraq to Iceland, prominent local singers and groups have showcased their talent in this tribute. One of the most prominent voices in the video is that of Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru. President Waqa’s gesture was not just a special homage to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary but “was also a personal gift from him to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.”



**Clockwise from Left:** LED video projections at the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the Tower of Africa in Mali, the Indian embassy in Washington DC, the US and the Indian High Commission in London

*Vaishnav jan to tene kahiye* is a Gujarati hymn that was written by Narsimha Mehta, a 15th-century poet. It was one of Bapu's favourite *bhajans*. Mahatma Gandhi included it to the roster of prayers routinely sung before he started his day.

### LIGHT UP THE WORLD

On the evening of October 2, 2018, iconic monuments across the world lit up in colours of the Mahatma, reiterating his message of peace and co-existence, and their relevance in today's world. In a novel initiative, glimpses of Mahatma's life and his teachings were displayed through spectacular LED video projections at over 120 locations globally, including at

historic landmarks such as the UK's Piccadilly Circus and Berlin's oldest residential quarter, Nikolaiviertel.

One of the most noteworthy projections was at Dubai's iconic Burj Khalifa, which was organised by the Indian embassy, Abu Dhabi and the Indian consulate in Dubai. It attracted a large number of spectators.

LED displays of Bapu's messages were also organised at Welt Museum in Vienna, Buda Castle in Budapest, Palazzo Senatorio in Rome, Prambanan Temple in Indonesia and Museo de Arte in Peru, among others.

The video film that was projected, highlighted key moments from Gandhi's life and a few of his inspiring quotes along with discourses and initiatives. These were presented in a spectacular yet simple visual narrative using hand-drawn illustrations layered with water colour and ink wash. Using neutral colours, the illustrations represented the simplicity of the life and teachings of one of the tallest personalities the world has seen.

**In the musical medley international artistes have sung Bapu's favourite *bhajan*, "*Vaishnav jan to*"**





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