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

— Shri Vayalar Ravi,
Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs
GLOBAL – INDIAN NETWORK OF KNOWLEDGE (GLOBAL–INK):
“THE VIRTUAL THINK TANK”


Global–INK positioned as a strategic “virtual think tank” connects Overseas Indians (knowledge providers) with the development process (knowledge receivers) in India and empowers them to partner in India’s progress.

Being a next generation knowledge management, collaboration and business solution platform, Global-INK provides context to connect knowledge experts with knowledge seekers. Consequently, these connections enable flow of knowledge and expertise from the Diaspora back into India and facilitate collective action.

Global – INK will catalyze Diaspora ability and willingness into well thought out projects and programs for development, transform individual initiatives into community action and achieve critical mass in chosen verticals.

The portal can be accessed only by registered users. Registration request can be submitted by filing out the registration form located on the Global-INK homepage (www.globalink.in)

CONNECTING INDIA WITH ITS DIASPORA

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
www.moia.gov.in
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There are nearly six million Indians living and working in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and they are playing a pivotal role in the development of the region.

Since its inception in 2007, the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre is touching the lives of thousands of overseas Indians.

GULF LINKS

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Special Report

ADVANTAGE OIFC

Since its inception in 2007, the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre is touching the lives of thousands of overseas Indians.

14 GULF LINKS

10 SPECIAL REPORT

12 MUSIC

HEALING MELODIES

Grammy nominee and practising monk Kowang Khcheog uses his flute as a bridge across Buddhism, Hinduism and the West.

22 DIASPORA

DIASPORA'S DATE WITH MAURITIUS

The ocean country is set to organise 6th Mini Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas in October.

28 BOOKS

BOMBAY GIRL

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

30 ARTS

ART OF SURVIVAL

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

32 DANCE

FUSION STEPS

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

36 TRAVEL

FRENCH CONNECTION

Love tranquility in the lap of exquisite colonial heritage? Your moment lies in a trip to the French settlements in India. Believe it, you won't feel away from the European grandeur...

42 CUISINE

ETHEREAL PALATE

A North-Eastern meal is always balanced and for every spicy dish, there is a bland one.
**Diaspora meet in Amsterdam**

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

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

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

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

**Punjab to launch card for NRIs**

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

Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal, accompanied by NRI Affairs Minister Bikram Singh Majithia and former union minister Balwant Singh Rajoobir, has asked the NRI Affairs Department to immediately work out the details for NRI cards and implement it at the earliest.

Badal said Punjab has to involve NRIs in the process of development by assuring them total support of the state government.

He said that all NRIs will be able to apply for this card on the website of the NRI department.

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

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

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

He said that these steps would instil confidence amongst NRIs who feel insecure property and investments in Punjab.

**Indian mission launches ayurveda centre in Trinidad**

**THE INDIAN High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago** has launched a centre for Ayurveda following a growing interest in the Caribbean in the traditional Indian system of medicine. The centre was inaugurated by Trinidad and Tobago’s Minister of Local Government, Suraj Ramchand.

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

He said this would be the second such academic programme to be launched at the university, the first being the Chair of Asian Studies. Ramchabhan said the steps followed several agreements signed between Trinidad and Tobago’s Indian-origin Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh during Persad-Bissessar’s historic visit to India in January.

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

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

**Kerala scores NRI investment for medical college**

**THE KERALA** government has given its approval to set up a ₹300 crore hospital and medical college in which the diaspora will be allowed to invest, it was announced recently.

The Kerala Institute of Medical Education and Research will come up in Alappuzha district in three years, an official said. State Chief Minister Oommen Chandy cleared the project at a recent cabinet meeting.

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

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

**Latin America looks to India**

**CHILE, CUBA** and Venezuela, the troika of Latin America’s premier grouping, have sought closer strategic and economic partnership with India and described New Delhi as “an emerging power” that can play an important role in transforming the region.

Seeking to scale up ties with India in diverse areas, Chile’s Foreign Minister Alfredo Moreno Charme listed the many advantages of India and the Latin American region working together to transform their societies and economies.

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

M. Ganapathy, Secretary (West) in the External Affairs Ministry, also made a strong pitch for an all-round acceleration of ties. “It is a win-win situation. The opportunities are manifold and tremendous. We are looking for a pan-continental engagement with the Communities of Latin American Countries (CELAC),” he said.

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

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

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

**INDIA AND South Korea signed an MoU on electoral reforms** on July 12 in New Delhi. The MoU was signed recently by Chief Election Commissioner of India V.S. Sampath and the chairperson of the National Electoral Commission of Republic of Korea, Justice Nung Hwan Kim.

“We are aware of Korea’s formidable record in democratic functioning and good electoral practices,” said Sampath.

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

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“We are aware of Korea’s formidable record in democratic functioning and good electoral practices,” said Sampath.

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

The Korean Election Commission is now the chair of the Association of Asian Election Authorities and India is the vice-chair.
The First Boeing C-17s to arrive in India by mid-2013

The First of 10 C-17 Globemaster III heavy airlifters, being built by Boeing for India, underwent a major production step with a recent ceremony at the Boeing facility in Long Beach, California. India is the largest C-17 customer outside the U.S. The Indian Air Force (IAF) will induct the first of the 10 C-17 Globemaster-III planes purchased from the U.S. in a $4.1 billion deal June 2013. Consul General of India in San Francisco, N. Parthasarathi, drove a rivet into the aircraft to mark the integration of the forward, centre and aft fuselages and wing assembly.

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

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

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

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

India-US defence ties on rise

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In a special gesture, signalling an upward swing in New Delhi’s Look East policy, India had hosted Thailand’s first female and youngest Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra as the Guest of Honour at the Republic Day function in January this year. This was the third consecutive year in which India had invited a leader from a Southeast Asian country as its chief guest at the Republic Day parade.

Indian wins Ramon Magasaysay Award

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

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

India, Thailand push for trilateral highway

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

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

Consider these: The OIFC has answered nearly 10,000 queries from overseas Indians who wanted to invest in India and wanted to know how to go about it. It has over 13,000 Indians overseas who have registered with it to stay connected for mutual benefit in the field of business.

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

“The task is difficult taking into consideration that overseas Indians are spread all over the world and across different time zones. The width and depth of questions is huge. Our objective is to ensure that no questions remain unanswered and no doubt unclarified,” the OIFC official added.

All these efforts fall in line with what the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Manmohan Singh has to say: “India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. I would like overseas Indian communities to take full advantage of these opportunities. I would like you to reach out and invest in a new India. Invest, not just financially, but intellectually, socially, culturally and, above all, emotionally.”

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

“At the OIFC ‘Diaspora Engagement Meet’ in April 2012, the Hon’ble Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Shri Vayalar Ravi has noted that the objectives of OIFC “will be to bring the Indian states, Indian business and potential overseas investors on the same platform and to facilitate the investors to identify investment opportunities.”

To achieve these objectives, the OIFC has established contacts with several thousands of overseas Indians through various shows and business forums held in India, the Caribbean, Europe, Middle East, North America and the United Kingdom, apart from India. In April 2012, the OIFC held an Indian Diaspora Engagement Meet in Nairobi, Kenya, for overseas Indians of East African nations.

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

The OIFC model is being studied by countries such as Vietnam, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Jamaica to act as a template for their own diaspora investors.
M O I A  and the European Union move towards establishing a futuristic framework for cooperation on migration and mobility

C onscious of the adverse impact of erratic migration and mobility of workers, India and the 27-nation European Union are hastening the process of establishing a framework to deal with issues thrown up by the movement of skilled and unskilled labour force. In this regard, the two sides held a day-long high-level dialogue in New Delhi on July 2 this year when they listed out the broad contours of the futuristic framework for cooperation on migration and mobility. The European Union side was led by European Commission Director General for Home Affairs Stefano Manservisi and it included representatives from the Presidency of the European Union, member-states and a delegation, apart from European External Action Service.

The Indian side was led by Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) Secretary Parvez Dewan and it included representatives from the MOIA including Joint Secretary Finance Anil Kumar Tiwari, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs and the India Centre for Migration. Following their deliberations on various subjects during the high-level dialogue, the two sides agreed that there were several areas of common interest for further cooperation on migration and mobility between India and the European Union. Both sides acknowledged that actions could comprehensively cover four priority areas — safe and legal migration, combating irregular migration, migration and development, and sharing information and best practices. They wanted safe and legal migration for which they decided that evidence-based research could be carried out jointly. That apart, the two sides preferred pre-departure orientation for migrant workers ahead of flying out to engage in gainful employment overseas.

The primary concern of a host nation with regard to migrant workers is lack of necessary skills that could help them land a job and earn a living in foreign land. For the purpose, the Indian and European Union sides noted that appropriate skill development actions in the fields where they are looking for overseas employment would be of help.

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

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

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

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

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

Another key area of discussion and convergence between India and the European Union was on migration and development under which they wanted to improve their knowledge base through an extended migration profile. This, they felt, would improve remittances by workers overseas and in circular migration, apart from regulating mobility of scientists and technologists to foster innovation. A major issue of concern was protection of victims, and in this regard the two sides agreed to share information and practices regarding international protection for those migrant workers in need.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“A joint India-European Union working group may be set up for this purpose,” the two sides averred. The high-level dialogue was conducted in a spirit of free and frank discussions and cooperation, emphasising mutual benefits and challenges.

States of globalisation and the dynamics of capitalist development are also driving migration – apart from demographic changes these days when internationalisation of labour mobility is the norm. Though figures on the Indian share of foreign-born proportion of the work force in some western European nations is unavailability, the total figure is about 18 percent, according to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) data for 2011.

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

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

SPECIAL REPORT

FOCUS MIGRATION

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

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With migrant workers facing odds in general, studies have shown that they have a higher rate of unemployment than natives in European Union and OECD nations.
The nearly six million-strong Indian workforce in six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is playing a pivotal role in the development of the region; the relationship is only poised to grow, writes Gyanendra Kumar Keshri and Aroonim Bhuyan.

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

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

Trade links between India and the Gulf region can be traced back to the earliest civilisations, dating back to over 5,000 years. The Arabs were skilled seafarers and used to traverse the oceans trading in goods like gold, jade and herbs.

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

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

Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi, who attaches immense importance to the welfare of expatriate Indian community in the Gulf region, lauded the role the Indians have played, not just in nation-building of the countries of their domicile, but also in their contribution to India’s growth, progress and welfare. He has visited each of the six GCC countries to forge personal bonds.

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

“Now, in return, they are sending billions of dollars back home, setting up schools, opening hospitals, doing welfare work,” the Minister added, referring to the remittances from the Indian community in the six GCC countries, which account for The famous Dubai Creek, the main disembarkation at Bur Dubai and a favourite hangout with Indians.

Our Indian community has been living and working in the Gulf as though it is their own land. They are the most law-abiding people there.

This shows the adaptability, the greatness of our people towards the countries where they live.

— Shri Vayalar Ravi, Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs.
a large chunk of such transfers that topped $66 billion last year — the highest for any country.

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

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

**LOOKING BACK, PATH AHEAD**

India’s ties with the region date back to more than two millennia when Arab seafarers discovered the secrets of the monsoon winds and used that in navigation to push trade.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**BEYPORE’S URU CONNECTION**

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

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

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

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

These are remembered and handed down to each generation in the form of verses. The boats, regardless of their size, are made without any charts or drawings. It is said that once the ships are built, the foreman can draw a waterline with his hands and when the vessel enters the water, it will sit exactly on this waterline.
looking for better opportunities. “With refineries coming up in Jeddah, Damman and Jubail, a large number of Indians started moving to Saudi Arabia in the 1970s,” said Syed Zia ur Rahman, chief executive of the Riyadh-based Mawiyah website serving the Indian diaspora in the Gulf.

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

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

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

“GCC economies are planning for the next diversification from hydrocarbon to non-hydrocarbon sectors. This will increase job opportunities in the areas of construction, hospitality and banking. Traditionally, the hydrocarbon sector had given scope for many technical personnel such as engineers, accountants, bankers, engineers, bankers, and other professionals who have played a vital role in GCC economies and will continue to do so. The telecom industry also will continue to provide opportunities for blue-collar workers from India,” Dr. Seetharaman adds.

There is heavy demand in the health care sector too. In Saudi Arabia alone, the largest of the GCC countries, many new healthcare projects are coming up. There is an increasing demand for Indian doctors and nurses in all the six nations. In fact, Indian nurses top the priority lists of both government and private hospitals. Today, the nearly six-million-strong Indian work force plays a pivotal role in the development of the GCC countries. “India and the Gulf region are complementing each other. GCC countries need Indians for their development, while India is dependent on the Gulf region for energy. A major portion of remittances to India comes from GCC countries,” said Ram Buxani, president of Cosmos-ITL Group, one of the oldest Indian-run business houses in the region.

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

Bahrain is small country in the region both geographically, with 712 sq. km of area, and in terms of population—1.2 million. It has been home to many Indians and will continue to do so. There is a total 2,200 Indians from Kerala, while Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu account for around 40,000 each. The remaining 50,000 are from Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab and other Indian states. The relations with Bahrain were reinforced when Minister Vayalar Ravi paid a visit to the country from November 14-16, 2011.

KUWAIT

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

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

“Many Gulf countries have completed their phase of infrastructure development which needed a lot of manual labour. Now, they are also focusing on knowledge-based industries. This is creating new opportunities for white-collar workers in the Gulf region,” said Kurian Kurikose, chairman of the Dubai-based Morison Management Consultants. Kurikose said another change in the pattern of Indian workers migrating to Gulf countries is the geographical spread. “Now there are more number of people from the north, north-west and west of India coming to Gulf countries, compared to those from south India,” he said.

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

Micky Jaglani
Head, Landmark Group
Fortune: $3.2 bn

Yusufali MA
Managing Director, EMKE Group
Fortune: $1.75 bn

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

Chhabria family
Partners, jumbo Electronics
Fortune: $1.3 bn

PNC Menon
Head, Ibabha Developers
Fortune: $1.2 bn

Surey Verkey
Founder, GEMS Education
Fortune: $950 mn

Rajen Khachand
Chairman, Dodsal
Fortune: $285 mn

Toni Jashanmal
Executive Director, Jashanmal Group
Fortune: $250 mn

LT Pagani
Chairman, Chotram and Sons
Fortune: $820 mn

Dr. Mohammed Ali
Founder, Gulf Engineering and Contracting
Fortune: $725 mn

Paras Shahidpooa
Chairman, Nikau Group
Fortune: $650 mn

Hitcha Bodani
Chairman, Bond Investment Group Holdings
Fortune: $630 mn

Yogesh Mhhta
MD, Petrochem Middle East
Fortune: $623 mn

Jayant Garwani
CEO, Lh Group
Fortune: $530 mn

Nilesh Ved
Founder, Apparel Group
Fortune: $480 mn

Khijni family
Founder, Khimji Ramdas LLC
Fortune: $390 mn

Santosh Joseph
President, Dubai Pearl
Fortune: $360 mn

Falal Kohlihollin
CEO, KIF Holding
Fortune: $100 mn

Mohan Valani
Vice-Chairman, AL Sheraa Group of Companies
Fortune: $285 mn

CK Menon
Chairman, Belhad Group
Fortune: $250 mn

Ram Buwani
Chairman, Cosmos-ITL Group
Fortune: $235 mn

Joy Akabas
MD, Joyakabas Group
Fortune: $230 mn

Rizwan Sajan
Chairman, Danube Building Materials
Fortune: $230 mn

Vasu Shergil
Chairman, Ragi Group
Fortune: $220 mn

Azad Moopen
Chairman, CM Group
Fortune: $215 mn

Aiyi Bhatta
Chairman, Bhatia Group
Fortune: $205 mn

Ramesh Ramakrishnan
Chairman, Transworld Trading
Fortune: $205 mn

CB Chothram Jethwani
Chairman, Goebbe Trading
Fortune: $190 mn

S Kumar Wadhawan
CEO, Sahara Group
Fortune: $180 mn

Maheshram Pancholi
Chairman, Arabian Trading Agency
Fortune: $170 mn


Gulf Indians top source of remittances

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

According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) estimates, the Gulf region accounted for an average 27 percent of the total remittance inflows to India between 2006-07 to 2009-10. In the year of global economic crisis in 2008-09, Gulf countries accounted for nearly 31 percent of the total remittance inflows to India. In 2011-12, India’s trade deficit increased to nearly $170 billion. However, remittances from overseas has been an important source of foreign currency in India and can help in addressing the balance of payment issue.

Indian stamps that were in circulation in the UAE.

BOOMING TRADE TIES

On the back of strong people-to-people contacts, cordial political relations and geographical proximity, India has emerged as the second-largest trading partner of the GCC countries, only slightly behind Japan. GCC countries’ trade with India has risen from barely 2 percent in 2001 to 11 percent in 2010, according to the International Monetary Fund data. India-GCC bilateral trade was $119 billion in 2010-11. It included $44 billion of India’s export to GCC. India is now the top exporter to the Gulf countries, while it is also the second-largest importer of Gulf products after Japan. GCC’s combined imports of goods stood at nearly $350 billion in 2010, of which India supplied almost 12 percent.

Almost 11 percent of total GCC exports go to India. With a share of 15.6 percent, Japan is the largest user of GCC products. India-GCC trade relations are set to further strengthen in the coming years, with a sharp increase in demand for fossil fuels in India, which is heavily dependent on Gulf oil and gas to meet its energy security needs. The six GCC countries control more than 45 percent of the world’s recoverable oil and 20 percent of gas resources. Nearly 40 percent of India’s crude oil import is met from GCC countries. Gulf countries are also cash-rich. Although there is no official figure, private estimates put the size of GCC sovereign wealth funds at around $2 trillion. Massive trade surplus resulting from the surge in hydrocarbon exports has led to the accumulation of huge cash in the GCC.

Gulf countries had a combined trade surplus of $520 billion in 2011. Gulf-based sovereign wealth funds have made some high-profile investments in the United States and Europe. However, due to disappointing returns from the investments in western countries, most of the Gulf funds are now exploring investment opportunities in India and other Asian countries. "India and Gulf countries are traditional trading partners. In the changing world economic order, this partnership is set to further strengthen," said M.J. Mohammed Iqbal, managing director of the Middle East unit of Toshiba Elevators that has a presence across the region.

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

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

Once it becomes operational, it is expected to remove several tariff and non-tariff barriers and help further boost two-way trade.
the country’s colourful tradition and impressive diaspora in New York, Singapore, The Hague, Durban and Toronto, India is now taking the Mini Bharatiya Diwas to the gem of the Indian Ocean. The sixth edition of the Mini PBD will be held in Mauritius on October 27-28, 2012, it was announced at a press meet addressed by Shri Mookhesswur Choonee, Minister of Arts and Culture, Government of Mauritius.

Choonee said that Mauritius will act as the venue for the event. This meet is aimed at providing a platform to Indian Diaspora to interact with the Indian Industry delegation. OIFC will showcase its services to the diaspora to facilitate engagement to the visiting Indian government. Mauritius will provide full support and participation in the Mini PBD, Choonee said. The Indian Ocean nation is set to organise the 6th Mini Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in October after showcasing the tradition and impact of Indian workers in Mauritius.

During his visit, Dewan met His Excellency Shri T.P. Seetharam, High Commissioner of India to Mauritius, in Port Louis on August 8. Dewan, who was on a two-day visit to the island nation, also visited the MGI in Moka. The announcement was reiterated by Shri Parvez Kumar Bachoo, GOSK, Vice-President of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, Government of Mauritius. His Excellency Shri T.P. Seetharam, High Commissioner of India to Mauritius, in Port Louis. He also held dialogues with Mookhesswur Choonee and H.E. Anil Kumar Rachoo, GOSK, Vice-Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, Government of Mauritius.

Confident about Mauritius, where he served from 2005-2008 and chaired the commission’s Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, Government of Mauritius.

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

The Harvard-trained, Boston-based surgeon will receive ‘India’s Most Admired Surgeon 2012’ award for pioneering work on anagiosenesis or growth of new blood vessels in the heart by laser stimulation and subsequent injection of patient’s own stem cells harvested from bone marrow. This “would be the future treatment of heart disease which is expected to save millions of lives worldwide,” said Hariawala, calling it “a natural bypass to bypass surgery.”

“I want to see a vibrant and aggressive government policy where India’s monetary resources are better utilised towards rural development and raising the standards of living for all Indians,” he said. Hariawala also plans to bring to India next year the artificial Titanium Heart or Ventricular Assist Device (VAD) implant that can play the role of a supplementary heart. Hariawala, who himself has not played any research role in the development of this device and is only responsible for taking the technology to India, hopes to get regulatory approvals in India by 2013.

The current FDA approved devices in U.S. and Europe cost about $100,000 ($75,65,500), excluding expenses for surgery. The price point for India is not established but is expected to be high initially, he said. But competition is expected to reduce the price in the long term as six U.S. companies currently manufacture the device.

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

Transforming Indian healthcare, with American expertise

Dr. Nainish Shah

A leading Indian-American doctor has proposed four major projects to transform India’s healthcare system with U.S. expertise. Nainish Shah, former president of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), met Indian Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad and Health Secretary VM Katko in Washington recently to outline the projects that have the support of AAPI.

Azad responded enthusiastically to his proposals for a U.S.-India physician exchange programme, infectious disease specialty course and training in India, emergency medical services and trauma centres and the U.S. alumni groups’ participation in improving medical education and health care in India. “I would like to see the first generation like me improve my nation’s condition. We want to change the working culture and offer facilities in India so that the middle and poor classes benefit,” Shah said.

The physicians exchange programme envisages voluntary mutually agreed reciprocal visits between 63,000 U.S. physicians of Indian origin and 70,000 specialists in India. The infectious disease specialty training was approved by the Government of India and the Medical Council of India in 2008, but the courses are yet to begin, Shah said.

Shah said Indian-American physicians working with U.S. medical groups and universities have received approvals for funding for Indian infectious disease teachers to come to the U.S. on scholarship for training and to acquaint themselves with the U.S. model. The U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) has agreed to support Shah’s programmes, particularly the Indian physician exchange programme, as part of its recent Coalition for Healthy India initiative. “The programme will help improve medical care and services that will benefit the poor and lower-middle classes, who don’t have the means to receive the kind of services provided by the private hospitals,” Shah said. USIBC plans the first exchange under the programme in the first quarter of 2013.

DIASPORA NEWS

NATURAL BYPASS

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

Infants’ savour

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

With an aim to increase the timely vaccination uptake amongst India’s infants, Professor Alok Bhargava, an Indian-American economist, has announced to launch a project to investigate the determinants of health status of children in the age group of 0-6 months in Haryana.

The project will be launched after approval of funds from the World Bank, said Bhargava, who was recently in Chandigarh to meet the health officials in Haryana. At present, only 58% of children in the 0-3 month group will be visited every six months and issued paper or electronic vaccination cards and will receive the recommended vaccinations,” said Bhargava.

He disclosed that the study would follow approximately 1,500 children at six-month intervals during the 18 months’ project. The information on child morbidity and anthropometric measures, and socioeconomic variables for households will also be recorded.

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

According to Bhargava, timely immunisations and improved maternal health are important Millennium Development Goals. While the nutritional and health status of children is critical for economic development, uptake of basic healthcare services such as child vaccinations is inadequate in developing countries such as India, claimed the economist.
A second appears to be an age when you wait for an imminent uncertainty. Unknown fear grips your lungs, numb your ratory in California, USA, 2,000 pound car-sized rover gust 6 morning. Those ‘seven minutes of terror’, the time between Curiosity touched the top of the Martian atmosphere brought cheers as the robot landed successfully. “I’m YOU!!!,” said a tweet after the safely on the surface of Mars.

An ITI Karhagpur alumnus, Indian-origin scientist Amitabha Ghosh played a key role in identifying the landing site for the NASA rover ‘Curiosity’ on Mars. Known since the 2001 mission, he contributed crucial instruments, including two for ingesting and analysing samples of powdered rock delivered by the rover’s robotic arm.

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

He later worked on two crucial instruments - APXS or Alpha particle X-Ray Spectrometer and Mini-TES or Miniature Thermal Emission Spectrometer – played on board Mars exploration rover. Prasad, to understand the nature of the Martian rocks. Ghosh is, however, not the only scientist of Indian-origin involved with the latest Mars rover, Mars, which is the local partner in the mission being organised by the Government of India, has already been accepted in principle by Indian High Commissioner, Mr. Aadar Gupta.

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

Although of Gujarati origin, Pandit Vedalankar pioneered the promotion of Hindi from the time he came to South Africa from India in 1947. “On 25 April 1948, with the help of two national organisations serving the religious needs of the Hindi community — the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha and the Sanatan Dharma Sabha, Panditji called a meeting of the Hindi speaking people to discuss the plight of their mother-tongue and to find possible solutions to promote the language.”

Rahulraaj Senthur, Joint Regional Director of the Gauteng Branch of the Sangh said, “The Hindi Shiksha Sangh was launched at this meeting and he became its first President, nurturing the organisation in this position for 27 years,” he said. He was also instrumental in introducing an annual Hindi Eisteddfod for both adults and children in 1951 which continues to this day. The Sangh has also promised to honour Swami Bhavani Dayal Sanyasi, born in South Africa to indentured labourer parents, for his involvement in the Indian community.

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

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

BRITISH AWARD FOR LORD KHALID HAMEED

Lord Khalid Hameed.
Sohana Badshah is a carefree rich "Bombay girl", who moves to London to study interior design – a crossover novelist talks about a tale of new India that straddles several continents.

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

Welcome to 'Bombay Girl' (Harper-Collins India) by Los Angeles-based jour-nalist-turned-novelist Kavita Daswani, that talks about a tale of new India that straddles several continents. It's one of the new crossover novels that are making glob-alised lifestyle statements with live-in relationships and heartaches.

Daswani, a former fashion editor of the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong, may not be household name on Indian book-shelves, but she has made the smart Indian heroine a bestseller in the West and glamour. Priya in 'The Village Bride of Beverly Hills' balances her life as a dutiful daughter-in-law with a secret ambition.

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

The sage "sent the silk cloth to the Bar-Putra as the apprehension was that the youth of Aryans that their homeland of India was better than the rest of the world into which they had tumbled in their search for a home. The 'March of the Aryans' details their knightly deeds and attachment to the concept of 'Deya (compassion), Dana (charity) and Dharma (righteousness)'.

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

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

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

The dark silhouettes of fishing boats anchored on the edge of the water in a misty haze of brown, ochre, black and inky blue draw the viewer to their shadowy depths. Artist Paresh Maity’s early landscapes of riverine Bengal in watercolour have a haunting air about them.

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

But watercolour is a powerful medium of expression whose transparency and glow are inspiring,” Vasudeo Kamath, Mumbai-based oil- and watercolourist and an alumnus of the J.J. School of Art, told IANS.

“The medium, as a tool of realistic representation, recently generated interest at an unusual exhibition, ‘Verve’, a commentary on life and landscapes in watercolour in the national capital.

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

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

“But you cannot play around with the paints unlike in the oil and acrylic mediums. The genre requires command over the medium of immediate expression that you transfer in watercolour. Watercolours, unlike acrylic and oil colours, wither with sunlight, high temperatures and time, losing their lustre,” Kamath added.

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

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

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

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

“Water is a complicated medium in today’s instant age. The artist has to plan in advance the contrast of light and shadow. Only those painters who have a clear concept of drawing can adapt,” Sawant said.

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

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

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

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

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

Gango Ghari (left) and White House (right) by Pune-based artist Prafull Sawant.

(Top) A painting titled ‘Let’s Talk’ by Prabal Mallick.

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

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

“Students of dance are seeking diverse inputs in their education that was virtually impossible a few years ago. Training in established forms of dance as well as other physical traditions such as martial arts, sports and body care systems from qualified teachers and institutions, experimenting with one’s own peers, learning from videos or through the Internet and being influenced by styles that are seemingly at opposing ends of the spectrum, are all part of the dance activity in the country,” Jayachandran says.

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

Experts say that while in the west, contemporary dancers drew on elements from classical ballet and contemporary to create a new idiom. Before Uday Shankar, contemporary dance in India, says Odissi exponent Sonal Mansingh, was often known to describe human body.

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

One of the pioneers of the contemporary dance movement was Chandrakala, whose unique style could not be copied after her death, says Prahlad. The Chennai-based Chandrakala used “dasi anam” — a form of temple dance — with yoga and Kalaripayattu in her contemporary, minimalistic productions to talk about social angst and freedom. Chandrakala was often known to describe her productions as “celebrations of the human body”.

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

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

One of the pioneers of the contemporary dance movement was Chandrakala, whose unique style could not be copied after her death, says Prahlad. The Chennai-based Chandrakala used “dasi anam” — a form of temple dance — with yoga and Kalaripayattu in her contemporary, minimalistic productions to talk about social angst and freedom. Chandrakala was often known to describe her productions as “celebrations of the human body”.

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

“I have been on the stage for 30 years. I am always contemporary, because I live in contemporary times,” Sonal Mansingh signs off.
Grammy nominee and practising monk Nawang Khechog uses his flute as a bridge across Buddhism, Hinduism and the West. Madhusree Chatterjee finds out how...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The musician, who was in India to perform at the World Flute Festival recently, is collaborating with Indian theologians to create a workshop module for ‘Bansi Yog’, a form of music therapy with flute as the healing instrument.
La Compagnie française des Indes orientales. That may seem like a mouthful, but it essentially translates as the ‘French East India Company’. The French foray into India was a late starter in the mid-1600s, more than half a century after the British, the Dutch and the Portuguese had established themselves. At the height of their presence in India, French India comprised Pondichéry (Puducherry today), Karikal, Yanaon and Chandernagore on the eastern coast, and Mahé on the western coast — apart from several minor establishments. Though they started late, the French lingered on well after the British. While Chandernagore in Bengal was ceded in 1950, Pondichéry, Yanam, Mahé, and Karikal were transferred to India in 1954. When they did finally retreat, what the French left behind as their legacy were charming towns with elegant churches, grand buildings in the European style of the day, streets that still bear French names, and policemen who used to, till quite recently, dress up in uniform of the French gendarme! PB takes you to three of their better known enclaves in India — Puducherry, Chandernagore and Mahé — to soak in some French ambience that survives in what have become very Indian towns.
The Mahatma Gandhi Statue and the 19th century Light House can be seen from the Promenade beach in Puducherry. (Top) The French War Memorial.

**PU Ducherry**

**In search of duality**

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

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

Once you breeze into Pondi via the stunningly picturesque East Coast Road—if, that is, you are driving down from Chennai—and are in a mood for a quick heritage tour, a visit is recommended to the local museum office. Yes, the HQ of the Puducherry Municipality. It is housed on Goubert Avenue in a building facing the sea and painted a pristine white, which seems to have been transported here from the Mediterranean seafront. Nearby is the French War Memorial, where soldiers who died in World War I are honoured in a ceremony on Bastille Day every year (July 14).

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

There are, of course, churches—ranging from the serene to the grand—to visit, and other historical structures to gaze upon, but the way to really enjoy the town is to walk around the French Quarter, taking in names like Dumas Street, Romain Rolland Avenue and Suffren Street, and soaking in a distinctly European ambience. Now, the food. Let’s first get the vegetarian out of the way. There are some really nice vegetarian eating joints in Pondi. Locals strongly recommend Surguru and Jayaram, both of which offer authentic South Indian fare. And if it is North Indian vegetarian you really are in Pondi. The eatery at Auroville is a must-visit, not only for the serenity of its setting, but also for its authentic fare. And scores of visitors to the town have vouched for the food at the Don Giovanni, with some even going so far as to contend that it is the best Italian restaurant in India. Other restaurants such as Rendezvous and Seagulls please make sure you do not leave without having the shark mince. The only problem is that it may not be on the menu every day. If it is not, it’s a good enough reason to extend your stay by a day—or two.

**CHANDERNAGORE**

**Where tranquility engulfs you**

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

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

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

This former French colony is dotted with churches, convents and other relics of its colonial past. Take a stroll at the Strand—the path along the riverbank—to experience overwhelming tranquility. Chandernagore Museum and Institute (Institute de Chandernagore) is a relic of the French era and boasts of a beautiful collection of French antiques (like cannons used in the Anglo-French war, 18th century wooden furniture, etc.) which are difficult to find anywhere else in the world. The institute still conducts regular classes to teach French.

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

**TRAVEL TIPS**

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

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

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

**Eating Out:** Try the famous Jolbhora Sandesh at Surya Kumar Modak & Grandore; sauvour multicuisine dishes at Rosso and Shalimar.

**TRAVEL TIPS**

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

**What to see:** Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, Promenades, Church Of Our Lady of Good Health, Children’s Park & Duplex Statue, The Maino, Le Café, Gandhi’s Statue, French War Memorial, 19th Century Light House, Aayi Mandapam, Raj Navas, Roman Rolland Library, Puducherry Museum, Arakamedu.

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

**Eating Out:** Try out Le Club, Satanga and Renovateur for French and European cuisine; Surguru and Appleby for South Indian fare; Don Giovanni for Italian dishes.
The nearest airport is at Digo:

Arabian Sea

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

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

Mahé was under the yoke of French rule for over 233 years. They began to rule Mahé in the year 1721. Originally, the island was called ‘Mayyazhi’ and the name was changed to ‘Mahé’ when Prime Minister de Pardaillan who recaptured it took place on August 16, 1962.

Mahé is within the Mahé District. The town is also easily accessible by road. The train station is located in Mahé itself. The town is also easily accessible by road.

The nearest airport is at Digo:

Arabian Sea

Far from Vazhunnavar changed the government House will take you to places that offer the most beautiful views in Mahé.

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

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

Every nook and corner of this small land has got its own wonderful story to tell, which keeps your eyes wide with awe and excitement. One of the profound symbols of the French revolution, the statue of Marianne, can be seen at the beautiful Tagore Park. Marianne is an imaginary character established by the French to mark the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution. Indulge in fine French architecture, or visit the Government House. A walk along the mini forest behind the Government House will take you to places that offer the most beautiful views in Mahé.

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

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

TRAVEL TIPS

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

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

Accommodation: Various homestay options are available in Mahé.

Eating Out: Try the local delights like Malabar fish curry, karimeen pollichathu, kochu curry and Kuttaraad duck curry with appams.

MAHÉ

Eyebow of the Arabian Sea

SILENCE OF THE LAMB

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

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

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


The London-based chef, known as the ‘Asian Alchemist’, says he can turn several traditional Indian dishes into disease-fighting concoctions.

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

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

Experts, however, recommend eating no more than half a nutmeg in any 24-hour period. The Indian chef also said he recommends that no more than one portion of his curry should be eaten per day.

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

Make the ‘Insomnia-No-More’ lamb curry at home with this recipe

INGREDIENTS:

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

METHOD:

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

2. Once the oil-and-spice mixture has cooled, add ginger and garlic and cook over low-medium heat until the garlic is golden brown in colour, stirring frequently. This should take no more than 2–3 minutes.

3. Add turmeric, chilli, nutmeg and salt, mix well and cook for about 20 seconds.

4. Add the onions, tomato puree and lamb to the pan, mix well and cook until the lamb is sealed all over, stirring all the time. This should take no more than 10 minutes.

5. Add enough boiling water to cover the lamb and bring back to the boil. Reduce to a low simmer and cover, uncovered, for 1½ hours, or for longer if the lamb is not tender. The desired consistency is that of a thick masala.

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

The culinary canvas of the North-eastern region is as vast as the lifestyles of the people inhabiting this beautiful land of blue hills and green valleys. Every ethnic community has its own distinguishing dishes, and the preparation method of a dish is hardly the same in the kitchens of two different communities. Yet, there is also an underlying unity in the food habits of the North-eastern people that distinguishes them from communities in the rest of the country. Sitting in another corner of the country, it is difficult to imagine the variety of medicinal herbs and leafy vegetables that are available on the river banks and the forests of the North-east. The wild pigs, wild chicken and the gavasa often make their way to the dinner plates of various communities during festivals; and there are not too many days without any festivity in this region where life means nothing but celebration.

A North-eastern meal is always balanced — and for every spicy dish, there is a bland one. Among the hill tribes, no meal is complete without plain boiled vegetables that go with the more spicy dishes. It is the soup of these boiled vegetables that gives the tribemen the strength to climb the lofty mountains and walk the miles to their fields. Vegetable stew, vegetable stern with needles, tender bamboo shoot with chilies, fish cooked in bamboo stem, pork stew with ginger, pork stew with bamboo shoot, dried pork and bamboo pickle, fish with colocasia leaves, fish with bottle gourd, fermented fish chutney, fish barbecued in banana leaves, chicken with ginger, pork with mustard, boiled rice, sweet rice pan cakes, stir fried duck, etc., are some of the popular dishes of the region.

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

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

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

Another important ingredient used in the region is khar. It is popular among most of the tribes, especially in Mizoram, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura. Khar is particularly used in preparation of pork, dry fish, and dishes of different herbs. Khar is prepared with a key ingredient, also called khar. The traditional ingredient is made by filtering water through the ashes of a banana stem, which is then called kola khar (derived from the local term of banana, kol or kola) or nagakhamkapa. A traditional Assamese meal invariably begins with a khar dish, prepared with raw papaya, pulses or any other main ingredient. However, the combination of khar and songa (acids) is not recommended. The Bodo, Rabha and Kachari people of Assam are fond of khar. Pork prepared with rice powder and khar is a mouthwatering unique dish of the region.

Chilies, in both green and red varieties, are widely used in North-eastern food. In Tripura and Manipur, dry chilli powder is used more. Different varieties of chilies are available in the region. It is specifically used in chutneys such as aholu of the Nagas, irama of the Manipuris, nagabambika of the Khasis, and shong of the Arunachalis. In Tripura and in Manipur, chilli powder is used in the preparation of various dishes. The use of Naga Bhut Jolokia (ghost pepper), also known as bhut jolokia or raj jolokia, is quite popular. A Naga dry pork dish prepared with chilies, ginger, garlic and musoja (a kind of herb) powder is now relished and appreciated in various countries outside India. In Assam, too, pork with Kharisa and bhut jolokia is very popular. Chutneys made with bamboo shoot and ghost pepper are very well known. Pickles from this variety of chili is a favorite in the region.

Green herbs are also widely used in the cuisines of the North-eastern region. Some of these herbs have medicinal value. Some...
tribes roast them in bamboo stems after wrapping them in green leaves. This is especially true of mesenga herbs. Lai, longmao, manimani, nodalbal, and disamrup are some of the popular herbs relished in the region. Crying in Arunachal, suba in Manipur, wak pura in Meghalaya and maisei bei in Mizoram are some special dishes prepared with herbs. Fish with green herbs is a favorite of the Assamese people.

Chutney is a kind of condiment which is very popular among the people of the North-east. It usually contains some mixture of spice(s) and vegetable(s) and/or fruit(s). Chutneys may be either wet or dry, as an accompaniment for a main dish. Rice is the staple food of the region. The large variety of rice found in the region has led to the specialization that the grain was first cultivated in Assam. Both the indica as well as the japonica varieties are grown in Assam. The most popular species of rice is joha (an aromatic rice). As a staple diet, rice is eaten either steam boiled (aahsu) or sun-dried (gaue). Some fine varieties of rice such as katabalia or kahnablam, etc., are available only in Assam. Rice is also taken as snacks in many different forms: roasted and ground (aadhok), boiled in its husk and flattened and puffed (aahsu). There also grows a variety of rice that can be just soaked in water and relished with milk and molasses. Kamol saul is one such variety found in Assam. The black sticky rice and brown rice of Manipur and joha and bora varieties of Assam are well-known across the world.

For most tribes in the North-east, a meal without a pork dish is hardly complete. The Assamese love their pork prepared with bamboo shoot or su-tung. Nagas like smoked pork with dry bamboo shoot and musungu seeds. The pork dish dholising is popular among the Khong tribes of Meghalaya. Pork pieces marinated by splinters of bamboo and seasoned with salt, chili, as well as turmeric powder are also fermented for preservation and cooking on special occasions.

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

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

The simplicity of the Arunachal is reflected in the food which is easy and quick to prepare. All you need is a vegetable of your choice and some home-grown ginger — no spicing for colouring and an oil to camouflage the look. With no embellishments, the food preserves its natural freshness. Aek, laatu, aoi axon, gox axon, amnyang are some of the popular dishes of Arunachal. The Assamese on the whole are rice eaters. The main difference between the majority non-tribal Assamese and the other tribes of Assam is that the latter prefer pork, and sun-dried and fermented fish. The use of lemon grass, coconut milk, chili paste and bamboo shoot in the preparation of the Assamese chutney dishes are influences of the Thai cuisine. Mashed potato (alayteki) and colocasia dishes are some other popular dishes of Assam.

Khamnang, aos, inuha, yoka pork are some of the popular dishes of Manipur, besides various fish dishes that occupy place of pride in Manipuri cuisines. Manipuri dishes have not only retained their original flavor but have also continued to evolve with time. The people of Manipur take pride in having the largest variety of dishes in their repertoire as compared to the neighbouring states. Besides rice and pork, if there is one thing that the people in Meghalaya cannot do without is kwai, the local betel nut. In a typical Khasi kitchen there is always a provision for smoked meat to be kept around the fireplace. They usually preserve meat or fish for months.

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

For years, the tribes of Tripura have coexisted with the Bengali migrants from East Bengal. They love simple food, just boiled vegetables seasoned with home grown ginger or chili. Bamboo shoot is another essential ingredient that accompanies almost every non-vegetarian dish in Tripura. With rice taking centrestage during the meal, and the abundant use of fresh vegetables and fruit, supplemented by meat or fish, cuisines of the North-east are high on nutritional value, less on calories and quite fibre-rich. The dishes of the North-east are easy to prepare. Ferment, roast and boil — these are the three steps followed in the preparation of most of the dishes. The North-eastern cuisines have also been influenced by various communities over the decades: the Thais, who once ruled over some parts of the territory; the Chinese because of their proximity and the Bengali migrants. The unusual combination of these outside influences and local traditions makes the food of the region unique in India.

(Aatif Lahkar is an acclaimed chef from Assam and an expert on North-eastern cuisine. He runs two signature restaurants, Khonba and Bhat Jobathia, in Guwahati)
FOUR INDIAN-American researchers figured among 96 named by President Barack Obama as recipients of the ‘Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers’, the highest U.S. honour for young professionals.

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

“Discoveries in science and technology not only strengthen our economy, they inspire us as a people,” Obama said while announcing the awards. “The impressive accomplishments of today’s awardees so early in their careers promise even greater advances in the years ahead,” he added.

The Presidential Early Career Awards embody the high priority the Obama Administration places on producing outstanding scientists and engineers to advance the nation’s goals, tackle grand challenges and contribute to the American economy, the White House announcement said.

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

US President Barack Obama has nominated Ranee Ramaswamy, an Indian-American master teacher and Bharatanatyam performer since 1978, as a member of the prestigious National Council on the Arts (NCA). Announcing her nomination along with other key administration posts, the U.S. president said in a statement: “These dedicated and accomplished individuals will be valued additions to my administration.”

Founder and co-artistic director of the Ragamala Dance Company, Ramaswamy has been a disciple of Alarmel Valli, one of India’s greatest living masters since 1984. She is the recipient of the 2011 McKnight Distinguished Artist Award and was named ‘2011 Artist of the Year’ by the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

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

“My son Robin has been appointed by the DFB as sports director and also belongs to the team management,” Dutt’s father Sabyasachi told IANS. Dutt replaced former German international player Matthias Sammer. Born to an Indian father and a German mother, Dutt came into the limelight when he was appointed as the coach of top Bundesliga club Leverkusen in June 2011. However, he was sacked on April 1 after a 1-7 away defeat to FC Barcelona in the Round of 16 UEFA Champions League match and four consecutive Bundesliga defeats that left the club in sixth position in the league.

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

Dutt joins German football body

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Ranee on US art council board

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

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

His first feature film as a story writer, Rajan wrote the dialogue and screen play for ‘Khushiyaan’, directed by another Indian-American Trilok Malik.

Rajan Gangahar wins best story award for ‘Khushiyaan’
It was a feast to remember for Delhi’s mango-lovers who got a taste of their favourites from 600 varieties of the ‘maharaja’ of fruits at the three-day International Mango Festival that ended in the Capital on July 8. With varieties such as Langda, Dusheri, Alphonso, Kela, Elaichi and Rasgulla on offer, the festival, held at Dilli Haat in Pitampura, New Delhi, saw participation from 17 traditional growers of mangoes, including the Central Institute for Sub-Tropical Horticulture, Mustafa Orchards and Purkazi. The benchmark of its popularity was the footfall it got from tourists and NRIs, but not just Delhi residents. The festival also displayed myriad varieties like Sirki, Kensington, Amrapali, Mallika Fazli and many more. The mangoes were displayed in three different halls and many of them were on sale as well. Other products made from the fruit like mango squash and pickles were also on sale. Other features of the fest were a mango-eating competition, mango quizzes and a mango slogan writing competition. The festival was organised by Delhi Government’s Tourism Department, Incredible India, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority and the National Horticulture Board.