

DESTINATION INDIA

CONVERSATIONS



CAPTURING MILESTONES

THIS YEAR'S IFFI IN GOA CELEBRATES NEW CINEMA

CRICKET

The 'Agony' after the 'Ecstasy':
Smashing A Billion Hopes!

INDIA GLOBAL

The World at War:
Challenges for India

ECONOMY

Policy Making in Our
Turbulent Times

CELEBRATING 250 GLORIOUS YEARS OF PRESIDENT'S BODYGUARDS REGIMENT



The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu presented a new Standard of Bodyguard and renewed Regimental Standard to the President's Bodyguard (PBG) at a ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The President congratulated all officers and soldiers of President's Bodyguard on the

completion of 250 glorious years of the Regiment. The President's Bodyguard is the oldest regiment in the Indian Army, having been raised as the Governor-General's Bodyguard (later the Viceroy's Bodyguard) in 1773. On January 27, 1950, the regiment was renamed the President's Bodyguard.



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So often we have been told, it is the 'timing' that matters most! Indeed, with only a few days to go for counting at the much-fought elections to the five states, we are having to go into print. Regardless of the results, should one expect more acrimony, or imagine that the tempo will die down. Will life be normal again, or are we going to continue making politics centre stage. Often, many of us, wonder if there are any issues and concerns outside of politics, but we seem to be getting more and more mired into it.

Meanwhile, there is much to report upon! The 54th edition of IFFI in Goa was a refreshing new start to recognition of OTT platforms and for more creative young minds. We bring a few select conversations from this event, which witnessed record attendances, but not without a rider – our report says that the city of Goa wants to figure more in the larger film canvas of the country, not just with an annual event, a film festival.

India and Indians need not apologise for being cricket crazy, the sport has now entered our blood stream. The nation happily comes to a grinding halt, when it is big time cricket and India is in the thick of it. With ten straight wins, we expected the last encounter to be no different. But then, did we hype it to such unimaginable levels, that cricket lost its own flavour and became a national issue? Did our boys, especially our youngsters, buckle under the pressure of national expectations? They should not have, but then they did. As is being said, the home crowd became the nemesis, the team could not live up to the pressure. But then we performed well, lost to a better team on that day. So, while the game carries on, interest in it is abated for the time being, with us yet not having recovered from the loss in the final match.

Global headwinds matter more as we have moved towards more global inter-dependence. Our domestic market size, a robust Indian outreach, provides that basic resilience. Yet, we cannot remain totally insulated. On all counts, especially the economy and the geo-politics in our region, in fact the so called 'region' is ever expanding, we need to tread with caution and care.

Navin Berry
Editor

VOICES



INDIA'S CONCERNS MUST GET AN EQUAL HEARING

"However, the US and other friendly countries must understand that as the world's largest democracy and a natural ally of the democratic West, India expects that they do not allow their territory to be misused by the merchants of terror who openly threaten the dismemberment of India. The US went to war with countries on the mere suspicion that the regimes there were harbouring anti-US forces. Similar sentiment should also motivate the US to act against forces inimical to India's integrity. Instead, those forces roam around freely issuing open threats to India and its diplomats in these countries. Some media houses glorify such elements and seek to embarrass India. In another "onliner" India conveyed clearly to the "biased" Western media that its policies cannot be dictated by a media house in New York."

- Ram Madhav, President, India Foundation in *The Indian Express*

MISINFORMATION IN BLACK OR WHITE

"All content identified as misinformation may or may not violate our content policies... If you want to, say, upload a video that no human has ever landed on the moon before, we think that is probably a video that should be allowed to be on YouTube because there's no risk of egregious real-world harm based off it. But that doesn't mean we want to recommend that content. But there might be... misinformation about when or how to vote that does have egregious role and consequences. That would be something that we would want to remove from the platform. I think it depends on the nature of the type of content."

- Timothy Katz, director and global head of responsibility at YouTube, speaking to reporters at Google's Delhi office



WHO WILL QUESTION AAP? WILL THEY ANSWER?

"AAP leaders should be prepared to answer people's questions on how AAP leaders did the liquor scam, the DJB scam, the tanker scam, the panic button scam, the school room scam, and why AAP leaders have played with the lives of civil defence volunteers, guest teachers, para medical staff, and other contractual employees. The chief minister should educate his workers on what would they say on the AAP government's failure on carrying out development in Delhi."

- Virendra Sachdeva, president, Delhi BJP



HOW RARE AND HOW COSTLY CAN ANY WHISKEY BE?

"The Macallan 1926 is the one whisky that every auctioneer wants to sell and every collector wants to own," Jonny Fowle, Sotheby's global head of spirits has been quoted confessing. The record-breaking sale was "nothing short of momentous for the whisky industry as a whole". The bottle sold on Saturday is the first to have undergone reconditioning by the distillery ahead of auction. This included replacing the cork and applying new glue to the corners of the bottle labels. And what is this \$2.7 million whisky like? A tippie given a sniff revealed notes of "rich dark fruits, black cherry compote alongside sticky dates, followed by intense sweet antique oak."

- Jonny Fowle, Sotheby's Global Head of Spirits

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THE TUNNEL COLLAPSE, 41 PRECIOUS LIVES

Our National Consciousness Needs a New Awakening



by NAVIN BERRY

It was that fateful day when the tunnel partially collapsed, with 41 construction workers trapped inside. The regular excavator machines were brought in, but with no success. Then came an auger machine to drill through the debris, to form a passage. This failed too, and a bigger machine was flown in. This machine made some headway, with some 9 metres of success. This hit a snag and then another machine was brought in. Drilling stopped and new solutions were thought of. Different approaches to dig, reach out, were devised. Pipes, visual cameras, some

Tunnels are favoured in mountain regions because of narrow valleys, lack of availability of land or in the name of preventing deforestation and displacement. However, blasting through Himalayan shear zones, faults and fractures, apart from major disasters like Silkyara, leads to incremental and prolonged socio-ecological losses that remain hidden. EIAs do not include villages located along tunnel alignments as "project-affected" because their land is not "acquired" for underground construction. But the roads, farms and houses located along the alignment of (atop) most tunnels are ridden with cracks, crevices and deformations, appearing during, and, sometimes years, after construction.

- Manshi Asher in *The Hindustan Times*

more drilling. Finally, rat-hole miners, a much-derided lot, came to the rescue, to manually drive home to the trapped 41.

Outside, closer to the final hour, 41 ambulances were waiting. Family members of the trapped workers were waiting. So, was the world with bated breath. Non-stop television coverage, anxious enquiries from all sections of the society, it has been one common concern. Whether we will succeed, and when? Also, waiting was the Uttarkhand CM with garlands, senior officials of the PMO, national disaster management agencies, a make shift hospital close by, a large team of doctors to examine the trapped souls, as and when they come out.

It was finally both man and machines that made the day possible. One word summed up the national reaction: RELIEF. We all felt a surge of relief, calm and joy. It was a joint endeavour of a kind seldom witnessed. So many arms of the government and the private sector were involved to make it a success. The trapped workers themselves helped. Outside, it was the locals, the PMO, the NDRF, the Engineers from the Indian Army, the rat-hole miners, and numerous others.

The good news is that they made it; reasonably from first reports, hale and hearty except for high BP, which they say is normal considering the anxiety they must have gone through.

Through the days, what became most important was to get the trapped workers out. They are out, after considerable concerted effort, and prayers answered. The trauma had overtaken the larger concern, in the first case, how and why the tunnel collapsed. We have no answers, except to go by select media reports. What is cardinal in our understanding is that systematic assessments and clearances were brushed aside through calculated subversion of rules. Imagine, government departments becoming adept at bypassing government rules!

The trauma had overtaken the larger concern, in the first case, how and why the tunnel collapsed. We have no answers, except to go by select media reports. What is cardinal in our understanding is that systematic assessments and clearances were brushed aside through calculated subversion of rules.



Bypassing a rule that requires an environmental clearance by breaking the tunnels with roads less than 100 km length, which would have been the requirement otherwise. There is also a large body of expert opinions saying the hills are fragile, and unlikely to take the impact of blasting dynamite, cutting of hills, and other such things which jeopardise the Himalayan ecology. We are also being told that caution and care is giving way to speed. We seem to be in a hurry and prone to short-cuts. Certainly, we have witnessed too much sloth already, but speed must be exercised with caution and concern for the hills. There are reports that some 16 such other projects are being scrutinised afresh. This is good news, except that they must be transparent and honest appraisals; calling out the truant is not so necessary as evaluating these projects and making required course corrections. Like, providing escape routes!

With this successful operation, have we as a nation created a new benchmark for disaster relief into the future? There have been natural and some not so natural disasters in the past, as life is everyday prone to them, and some may happen into the future. A national disaster management exercise of this magnitude, has seldom been seen before. We should be, and indeed are, proud that we did succeed, with this delicate and dangerous mission. Will the National Disaster Management Authority be upgraded? Will a larger sub-set be engaged as the first circle of reference in any such future misadventures? Will we see a larger and more empowered inner circle?

Only a few months earlier, there were unmitigated disasters as massive unprecedented floods ravaged life and living in the hills, in both Uttarakhand and in Himachal. There was much loss to property, economy with a state like Himachal claiming losses in excess of 10,000 crore rupees. Admittedly, these were not the same as the tunnel collapse; here was a government run operation under way, with government agencies managing them. Holistically, was our response similarly adequate and responsible, in other disaster situations?

We cannot but recall that not too long ago, when covid struck the nation's economy and the workforce, thousands of migrant families made their way to their respective homes. Mostly on foot, trekking hundred of kilometres, with family and baggage. It was a most cruel sight, to say the least. As a nation, how much did we go beyond lip service, tonnes of sympathy but what beyond? It's a pity that many of the NGOs did not also come forward. Fortunately, no loss of life was reported but we did not acquit ourselves well as a people. Here was fellow human misery in full view!

These 41 lives must teach us the value of life, even more. They have proved precious lives, as indeed they were. Our national consciousness needs a new awakening. To begin with, should we wait for the next tragedy? Why not begin now, right away? Like valuing each and every less privileged soul we pass by each day in our everyday life? **DI**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Navin Berry, Editor, Destination India, over five decades has edited publications like CityScan, India

Debates and Travel Trends Today. He is the founder of SATTE, India's first inbound tourism mart, biggest in Asia.

The World at War

CHALLENGES FOR INDIA



by MAJ GEN JAGATBIR SINGH, VSM (RETD) and
MAJ GEN VK SINGH, VSM (RETD)

Introduction

Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the Western world has been harbouring an elaborate fantasy that now seems to be unravelling. Democracy had won and communism and autocracy had been defeated. Russia was not a threat and China was just a trading partner. Europe focussed on welfare schemes and spending on the military declined. The US became the lead actor and the Western world assumed a supporting role. The danger of slipping into complacency were ignored. As perceived external threats receded, domestic issues took precedence and welfare measures took centre stage.

The foundations of this fantasy have now been shaken; the earlier

crisis in the form of involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan were comparatively easy to deal with, as there was unanimity in approach and minimal interference from outside powers.

The first major setback was the Covid 19 pandemic and the resultant faltering of the global supply chain had a tailspin effect on global economy. It revealed the vulnerability and inter dependability of the global system of trade. The world went into lockdown and companies around the world discovered that after optimising for efficiency for decades, they no longer had the resilience needed to deal with the sudden shocks. The next was the disastrous pullout of the US from Afghanistan, and the return of the Taliban, literally turning the clock back by two decades in a country which has witnessed much suffering.

2022 saw the Ukrainian War erupt which was the first conflict in Europe post World War II and when the world's attention was

Russia was not a threat and China was just a trading partner. Europe focussed on welfare schemes and spending on the military declined. The US became the lead actor and the Western world assumed a supporting role. The danger of slipping into complacency were ignored.

fully focussed there, the Hamas unleashed a vicious attack against Israel, which only reinforced the fact that the fairly-tale the West had been watching in multiple theatres across the globe had lulled them into a false sense of security.

The Ongoing Conflicts

The wars in Ethiopia and Ukraine resulted in at least 180,000 battle-related deaths in 2022. The fighting in Khartoum and the Darfur region resulted in approximately 10,000 deaths and over 4.8 million people being internally displaced while more than 1.3 million others

fled the country as refugees. These are estimates, as information from these conflicts can rarely be accurate and are subject to extensive propaganda. If we take the data at face value, then more people died in these three conflicts in 2022, than in the whole world the year before.

In spite of various advances in war fighting technologies, fighting has been characterised by attrition. This type of warfare has contributed to the high casualty numbers. The nature of the adversaries has also varied with non-state actors taking centre stage in most conflicts. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 being an exception but, in that war too, we have seen a hybrid conflict with proxies coming into play. With the Russian invasion of Ukraine, high-intensity conflict returned to Europe, which had previously enjoyed several decades of relative peace and stability.

Violent conflicts and confrontation are now raging in multiple parts of the world. Hamas's 07 October attack on Israel, and the Israeli offensive on Gaza, has raised the spectre of an expanded conflict in the Middle East with Iran and its puppets the three H's; Hezbollah, Hamas and Houthis. Ukraine, which was firmly in the arc lights for over eighteen months has suddenly found the spot light shifted though the conflict still carries on. Unfortunately, the Ukrainian counter attack lacked both tempo and bite and it seems to be an unwinnable scenario.

There has been a surge in violence across Syria, including a wave of armed drone attacks that threatened US troops stationed there. In the Caucasus in late September, Azerbaijan taking advantage of Russia's pre-occupation in Ukraine seized the disputed Enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh (forcing an estimated 150,000 ethnic Armenians to flee their historical home) and setting the stage for renewed fighting with Armenia.

In Africa, the civil war in Sudan rages on, conflict has returned to Ethiopia, and the military takeover of Niger in July was the



ninth coup or attempted power grab in just over three years in West and Central Africa, a region that over the last decade had made strides to shed its reputation as a "coup belt", only for persistent insecurity and corruption to open the door to military leaders.

There are now concerns that Hamas's attack and the Israeli response in the Gaza Strip could provide a window of opportunity for the global jihadi movement to revive itself after years of decline. Al Qaeda and ISIS may now pose a fresh threat. FBI Director Christopher Wray told a United States Senate Committee that the terror threat has been raised to a "whole other level" because of ongoing conflict in the region.

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The Uppsala Report

According to a report from Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) at Uppsala University, at least 2,37,000 people died in organised violence in 2022. This was a 97 per cent increase compared with the previous year, and the highest number since the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

In fact, according to the study conducted by the Peace Research Institute Oslo, the number, intensity, and length of conflicts worldwide is at its highest level since before the end of the Cold War. They concluded that there were 55 active conflicts in 2022, with the average one lasting about eight to eleven years, a substantial increase from the thirty-three active conflicts lasting an average of seven years a decade earlier.

Alongside war has come record levels of human upheaval. In 2022,

a quarter of the world's population—two billion people—lived in conflict-affected areas. While the number of those forcibly displaced worldwide reached a record 108 million. These figures are all alarming to put it mildly.

Need to Address the Drivers of the Conflicts

Unfortunately, as fighting flares worldwide, the root causes of conflict remain unresolved and the focus seems to be only on the immediate cause. Simultaneously, positions are increasingly getting hardened and peace negotiations more difficult due to the inter-twining of interests of those in a position to broker peace. The result is that voices are getting shriller, societies are being divided and resources diverted from development to aid, refugees are displaced, and rules of conflict are increasingly being cast away, while innocents caught in the cross fire continue to suffer.

Wars which were once rare are now common and from being mainly binary in nature are now multi-party. There is also the changing nature of conflict. Wars now tend to be fought between states and armed groups committed to different causes with access to relatively advanced weaponry and other forms of technology, as well as money and material from other states who function on a principle of 'plausible deniability.' The norms that shaped many earlier wars no longer exist.

Defeating the Hamas militarily is achievable but more difficult than crushing it on the battlefield, is eliminating its radical ideology and narratives.

Globalisation of war has also led to greater complexities. Countries including US, Russia, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Qatar regularly become drawn in, whether indirectly or directly, as has been seen repeatedly in conflicts in the Middle East. Clausewitz had visualized the problems of waging war and had written in 'On War' that; "we must evaluate the political sympathies of other states and the effect the war may have on them."

The more parties that are involved in a conflict, the harder it is to end it. With little clarity on the perceived end state, wars are now getting difficult to end. General VN Sharma, the former Army Chief, while writing the foreword of *Armour 71*, had written that "it is



One cannot predict which cross border incident with Pakistan or which Galwan with China will spin completely out of control. The sun is bright, the grass is dry, the heat is blistering, all that is needed to start an inferno, is a small spark. Therefore, it is prudent to maintain vigil for the spark, and not be lulled into a false sense of complacency. The more alert we are, the safer is our nation and our people.

easy to start a war, but once started, it is difficult to terminate hostilities on terms advantageous to oneself. A good General must plan for the termination of conflict before starting one. A good General must also attempt to achieve the national aim with minimum loss of men and material, both of oneself and of the enemy. To motivate troops in battle, 'hating the enemy' must be avoided as the aim is never to destroy masses of the human population or to cause total distress to the civil population by levelling cities and destroying families." India achieved this in its decisive victory in 1971.

The Challenges for India

In our own neighbourhood, the pot is boiling. Afghanistan under Taliban can be termed 'a terrorist state.' There is a military junta in control in Myanmar. Pakistan believes in nurturing terrorists and sponsoring terrorism as a strategic tool of state policy. India has been a victim of cross-border terrorism, and cross LC firing, always originating from Pakistan. This is the reason that the Line of Control with Pakistan and Line of Actual Control with China continue to remain tense. During the Covid pandemic, India faced a stand-off with China in the remote rarified regions of Galwan. While this did bring to fore the realisation of the true face of China, the impact worldwide was not as apparent. China's belligerence is raising the stakes both as far as our unresolved borders are concerned as well as in the Indian Ocean Region.

India's longstanding border disputes with Pakistan and China remain a significant concern. The Kashmir issue with Pakistan and the Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh borders with China are potential flash-points for military conflict. This is not all, as both are nuclear-armed

nations, India faces the challenge of a nuclear conflict in the region from both Pakistan and China, individually and collectively.

Furthermore, regional instability, particularly in Afghanistan and Myanmar, impact India's security. Every political development in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, and Bhutan has its own impact on India.

The global rise of extremist ideologies and the acceptance of these ideologies by an increasing segment of society as is being seen by the pro-Palestinian rallies in major Western cities is a matter of concern in India's internal security matrix.

The non-traditional security threats include; Cybersecurity. With the rapid digitization of India's economy and infrastructure, cybersecurity has emerged as a critical area of concern. India faces cyber-attacks, espionage, and data theft threats, which can have implications for national security.

Climate change poses a significant threat to India's security. Natural disasters, water scarcity, and environmental degradation has the potential to lead to resource conflicts and mass migration, impacting social stability.

As a \$ 4 trillion economy, India's global economic integration makes it vulnerable to global economic fluctuations, trade wars, and energy security challenges. The impact of fluctuations of crude oil supplies and implementation of the IMEC trade corridor and the NSTC are all linked to the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East.

Therefore, when we consider the prevalent security scenario at the international level and/or at the regional level, it can be described as anything but stable and peaceful. What are the present conflicts that we have witnessed and are currently witnessing telling us? These are uncertain times. One cannot predict which cross border incident with Pakistan or which Galwan with China will spin completely out of control. We are not war mongers, but as we have stated in an earlier article too, that to believe that there will be no war, or war can be averted, is a disastrous fallacy. The sun is bright, the grass is dry, the heat is blistering, all that is needed to start an inferno, is a small spark. Therefore, it is prudent to maintain vigil for the spark, and not be lulled into a false sense of complacency. The more alert we are, the safer is our nation and our people.

Conclusion

A new approach to reading, resolving, managing conflicts and their impact is therefore urgently needed. Debates at the United Nations seldom have outcomes. Deadlocks in the Security Council mean that the UN can neither offer solutions nor censure aggression. Negotiators instead of looking at the larger picture of stopping conflict and devising durable political solutions are congratulating themselves after plucking low hanging fruit such as export of grain through the Black Sea and permitting aid to reach Gaza. The unvarnished truth is that the UN is unfortunately increasingly lacking leverage and credibility with conflicting parties.

Debates at the United Nations seldom have outcomes. Deadlocks in the Security Council mean that the UN can neither offer solutions nor censure aggression. The unvarnished truth is that the UN is unfortunately increasingly lacking leverage and credibility with conflicting parties.

There has no doubt been an unprecedented churn in global violence that has shown no signs of abating and on the contrary the trajectory seems heading upwards. Unfortunately, the United Nations by the very structure of its Security Council is unable to arrest this trend.

Sadly, the world is increasingly being overwhelmed by a series of global

As a \$ 4 trillion economy, India's global economic integration makes it vulnerable to global economic fluctuations, trade wars, and energy security challenges. The impact of fluctuations of crude oil supplies and implementation of the IMEC trade corridor and the NSTC are all linked to the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East.

crises as violence grinds on unabated, while the shadow of an aggressive China is only getting darker. Unfortunately, we seem to be wishing the inevitable away. **Gaza has given us a clear signal, that though technology is important, it should be used as assistance not replacement. Our military resolve needs to be backed by a strong deterrence of our Armed Forces in terms of their capabilities, training, doctrines, equipment, technology, manufacturing, and military cooperation with other nations. Through such resolve and alertness, we will achieve the deterrence that is required at this date and time.** □

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Maj Gen VK Singh, VSM was commissioned into The Scinde Horse in Dec 1983. The officer has commanded an Independent Recce Sqn in the desert sector, and has the distinction of being the first Armoured

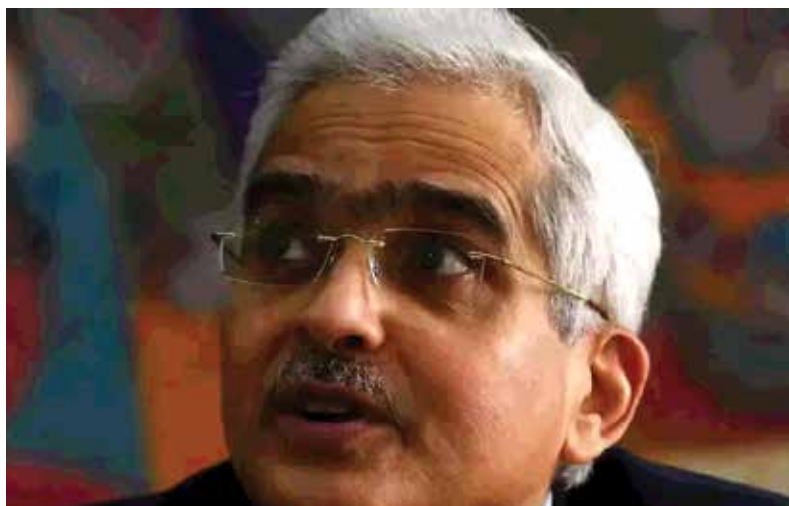
Corps Officer to command an Assam Rifles Battalion in Counter Insurgency Operations in Manipur and Nagaland, as well as the first General Cadre Officer to command a Strategic Forces Brigade. He then commanded 12 Infantry Division (RAPID) in Western Sector. The General is a fourth generation army officer.



Major General Jagatbir Singh was commissioned into 18 Cavalry in December 1981. During his 38 years of service in the Army he has held various command, staff and instructional appointments and served in varied

terrains in the country. He has served in a United Nations Peace Keeping Mission as a Military Observer in Iraq and Kuwait. He has been an instructor to Indian Military Academy and the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington. He is a prolific writer in defence & national security and adept at public speaking.

POLICY MAKING IN OUR TURBULENT TIMES: Pro-active, Pragmatic and Prudent



by SHAKTI KANTA DAS

The global economy continues to face multiple macroeconomic and geopolitical shocks. The prediction of a global recession has not come true but there are indications that global growth is slowing down amid tightening financial conditions and still elevated inflation. Even as the fallouts of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the unprecedented tightening of monetary policy reverberate across the world, the recent developments in West Asia have added to the litany of challenges for the global economy. Policymaking in this scenario becomes extremely challenging with difficult trade-offs – growth versus inflation; price stability versus financial stability; and current exigency versus future sustainability. There is always a risk of doing too little or doing too much. In such a scenario, I would like to start with the Reserve Bank of India's approach to policy making during this turbulent period.

Our Approach

To protect the economy from the relentless shocks in the recent period, our endeavour has been to remain proactive, pragmatic and prudent in our policy response. We were conscious of the fact that an overdose of monetary medicine, while relieving the pain in the short run, could give rise to increased vulnerability and fragility over a period of time. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we injected liquidity, but almost every measure of liquidity injection was for a limited period and was targeted. By doing so, we avoided the pitfall of a liquidity trap. Further, our lending standards were not diluted in terms of our counterparties (banks) and collateral requirements for on-lending to stressed entities or sectors.

It was like a year-end summing of what India has undergone through 2023, and what the future holds. How the RBI will keep a close watch on currents in the Indian economy. Governor, **Shakti Kanta Das** in his key-note address at the annual meeting of the Indian Institute of Economic Studies, Tokyo highlights some of the salient features, how the macro picture is unfolding for Indian economy.

On the regulatory side also, our actions were measured. We allowed lenders to offer moratorium on loan repayments and interest payments. We put in place loan resolution frameworks for the COVID-19 related stressed assets thereafter. These loan resolution frameworks were not open ended but subject to achievement of certain financial and operational parameters. The idea was to avoid the phenomenon of 'moral hazard' and other pitfalls typically associated with open ended restructuring of loans.

We are acutely aware that a healthy and efficient banking and financial system is the primary stabilising force against various shocks. Mindful of this, we have carried out a series of reforms in our regulatory and supervisory architecture. We have come out with certain governance guidelines for banks and introduced a scale-based regulation for non-bank financial companies (NBFCs), based on the size and complexity of their businesses. The process of supervision of banks, NBFCs and other financial entities has also been substantially strengthened with the focus being on early detection and pre-emptive correction, rather than reacting to the symptoms of weaknesses.

Thanks to a confluence of factors, including to a large extent, the steps taken by the Reserve Bank, the Indian economy has emerged as an epitome of stability and opportunity. We have not only kept our house in order against large and overlapping global shocks, but also



improved our macroeconomic fundamentals and buffers. While growth remains on track, inflation is on a path of moderation, though it is still above the target. The balance sheets of banks and corporates are healthiest in a long time and with the public investment push by the Government, they create favourable conditions for a sustained revival in investment. Consumer confidence, as evident from our surveys, is on a rising trajectory since the pandemic lows. Our external sector inspires confidence as we are reaping export opportunities, in the services sector; our current account deficit remains eminently manageable; and we have bolstered our forex reserves to deal with potential eventualities.

Today, India has become the new engine of global growth with its young demography¹, improving physical and digital infrastructure and above all, an enabling policy environment. In this context, Japan and India continue to be the natural partners. We share deep historical ties. The teachings of Gautama Buddha have inspired our shared ethos and cultures. We look up to the Japanese “Economic Miracle” as a learning opportunity as we prepare the ground to uplift India’s growth trajectory. Japan has played a critical role in infrastructure building in India through several public and private sector partnerships.² There are many collaboration opportunities in frontier technologies such as space technology, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, rare-earths extraction, semiconductors and resilient supply chains, and other areas. Our partnership could also be potentially strengthened in the sphere of human resources. I am sure the future offers limitless possibilities to deepen our engagements for the benefit our people and the entire world.

It would be worthwhile here to look a little deeper into India’s growth drivers, its experience of managing inflation since the pandemic, and the emerging opportunities and challenges especially in the FinTech space.

The GDP grew by 7.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2023-24, and the available high frequency indicators suggest continuation of this momentum. For the full year 2023-24, real GDP growth is projected at 6.5 per cent by the Reserve Bank.

“We are acutely aware that a healthy and efficient banking and financial system is the primary stabilising force against various shocks. Mindful of this, we have carried out a series of reforms in our regulatory and supervisory architecture.”

Growth Drivers

Policy focus on strengthening macroeconomic fundamentals and continued structural reforms have made India distinct in terms of growth outcomes. This was reflected in the rebound in GDP growth after the pandemic from a contraction of 5.8 per cent in 2020-21 (pandemic year) to a growth of 9.1 per cent in 2021-22 and 7.2 per cent in 2022-23. The GDP grew by 7.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2023-24, and the available high frequency indicators suggest continuation of this momentum. For the full year 2023-24, real GDP growth is projected at 6.5 per cent by the Reserve Bank.

The innate resilience of the Indian economy could be attributed to its well diversified economic structure. Although India has made rapid strides in external openness through trade and financial channels and gained competitiveness, its core dependence for growth continues to be its domestic demand which also provides a cushion against external shocks. Among the constituents of aggregate demand, private consumption accounts for over half of GDP (around 57.0 per cent average share during 2011-12 to 2022-23), followed by fixed investment and government consumption.

During the post-pandemic recovery, private consumption contributed an average of 66.0 per cent to GDP growth during 2021-22 and 2022-23.³ At the same time, structural reforms related to banking, digitalisation, taxation, manufacturing, etc., have laid the foundation for a strong

and sustainable growth over the medium and long term.

On the supply side, while the agricultural and the industrial sectors are maintaining their underlying momentum with renewed focus on manufacturing, a major part of the India’s growth is coming from the services sector which again largely depends on domestic demand. With crucial transformations underway, India’s services sector is expected



to lift its future trajectory of growth with a major impetus coming from rapid digitalisation of the economy, which could be a game-changer for economic development. The external demand for India's services is also increasingly gaining significance with services exports growing rapidly on the back of rising competitiveness in niche areas. India's services exports are diversifying from information technology (IT) related services to other professional services such as business development, research and development, professional management, accountancy and legal services. Domestic services are also undergoing a steady shift from low-skill consumer-oriented services towards more technology-enabled business services. The newly emerging start-ups are largely concentrated in the services sector. Capitalising on India's impressive public digital infrastructure, many of these start-ups function as service providers for other businesses by offering services ranging from facilitating digitization and improving access to credit.

Managing Inflation

As in the case of growth, there are some nuances in India's experience in managing inflation vis-à-vis other countries. The nature of inflation shocks throughout much of 2020 and 2021 in India were largely supply-side shocks, coming from COVID-19 lockdowns and adverse weather events. As lockdowns were withdrawn and the impact of weather disturbances waned, forces of inflation correction began to operate. The monetary and fiscal support provided during the pandemic were measured and targeted. Consequently, demand-led inflation pressures in India were much less compared to several other economies. The monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank was, therefore, able to look through the intermittent higher inflation prints with the aim of supporting economic growth during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The MPC took the considered view that policy tightening in such a scenario would only accentuate the growth slowdown and impart higher volatility, without being able to properly address the first-round effects of temporary supply side shocks. This approach was in consonance with the flexibility embedded in our flexible inflation targeting framework wherein the primary objective of monetary policy is to maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth.

In early 2022, with the waning of COVID-19 shocks on inflation, gradual easing of supply bottlenecks and forecast of a normal monsoon, inflation was expected to witness a significant moderation to the target rate of 4 per cent by Q3:2022-23. These expectations were completely

India's services sector is expected to lift its future trajectory of growth with a major impetus coming from rapid digitalisation of the economy, which could be a game-changer for economic development.

“As things stand today, the MPC in its October 2023 meeting has projected CPI inflation at 5.4 per cent for 2023-24, a moderation from 6.7 per cent in 2022-23. Headline inflation, however, remains vulnerable to recurring and overlapping food price shocks.”

overtaken by the war in Ukraine. Initially, the shocks came from the spike in global fuel and food prices, which got further accentuated by local adverse weather events. These shocks got transmitted to the retail prices of goods and services, as domestic economic recovery and rising demand enabled pass-through of the large pent-up input costs. This also imparted stickiness to underlying core inflation. The result was a generalized inflationary impulse.

In the period that followed the Ukraine war in 2022, what stood out in India was the coordinated monetary and fiscal policy response to tame the inflationary pressures. The MPC quickly changed gears by prioritising inflation over growth, while changing its stance from being accommodative to withdrawal of accommodation in April 2022. The MPC then went on to increase the policy repo rate by 250 bps cumulatively between May 2022 and February 2023, to keep inflation expectations anchored, break the core inflation persistence, and contain second round effects.

Looking back, there were several aspects in our conduct of policy that helped in taking decisive and timely action during the heightened inflation pressures seen in 2022-23. First, prudence was the cornerstone of the monetary policy response to the COVID-19 shock, with most of the extraordinary liquidity injection measures being targeted with pre-set end dates. This ensured an orderly unwinding of the monetary stimulus as growth recovered. Second, the Government also adhered to fiscal prudence, with actual fiscal deficit for 2022-23 kept in line with the Budget Estimates. Third, complementing the monetary policy measures were a series of proactive and targeted supply side measures by the Government.⁵ All these factors put together, proved to be critical in moderating the price pressures.

As things stand today, the MPC in its October 2023 meeting has projected CPI



inflation at 5.4 per cent for 2023-24, a moderation from 6.7 per cent in 2022-23. Headline inflation, however, remains vulnerable to recurring and overlapping food price shocks. The core inflation has also moderated by 170 basis points since its recent peak in January 2023. In these circumstances, monetary policy remains watchful and actively disinflationary to progressively align inflation to the target, while supporting growth.

FinTech Space

The advent of FinTechs has transformed the landscape of traditional financial services. This has tremendously improved the delivery of financial services by making them faster, cheaper, efficient and more accessible. India is currently the world's third largest FinTech ecosystem in terms of the number of FinTechs operating in India. It is growing at a robust pace and is projected to generate around US\$200 billion in revenue by the year 2030, contributing to approximately 13 per cent of the global FinTech industry's total revenue in 2030. The defining feature of the Indian 'model' of digitisation is the lead taken by the Government and the Public Sector in building infrastructures, on top of which innovative products are created by private sector FinTech firms and start-ups. The JAM trinity – a combination of bank accounts (Jan Dhan); Aadhaar, India's biometric identity system that provides a single and portable proof of identity; and Mobile phone numbers – has revolutionised India's FinTech ecosystem in terms of financial inclusion, digitisation of financial services, and overall service delivery.

On top of this, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has played a phenomenal role in the FinTech revolution in India. Its success story has in fact become an international model. Its ability to instantly transfer money between bank accounts through mobile applications has transformed the way people make digital transactions. The interoperability of UPI across banks and payments systems has created a unified payment ecosystem. It has facilitated digital payments even for small businesses and street vendors, leading to greater financial inclusion. UPI has also spurred development of new payment related products and services⁸. Further, linking of the UPI with fast payment systems of other countries is also being undertaken. Linkage of fast payment systems of India and Japan may also be explored to leverage the power of fintech and make cross-border payments more efficient and less costly.

The Reserve Bank has also commenced pilot runs of India's central bank digital currency (CBDC), the e-Rupee, for specific use cases in both wholesale and retail segments. Our approach to FinTech ecosystem is customer-centric; focus on good governance; ensuring effective oversight, ethical conduct and risk management; and encouraging

“The JAM trinity – a combination of bank accounts (Jan Dhan); Aadhaar, India's biometric identity system; and Mobile phone numbers – has revolutionised India's FinTech ecosystem in terms of financial inclusion, digitisation of financial services, and overall service delivery.”

self-regulation by the FinTechs themselves through a Self-Regulatory Organization (SRO).

Although financial innovation enhances ease of payment and lowers its cost, they also pose risks and challenges to the financial system. These risks have a bearing on overall financial stability and market integrity. We, therefore, intend to play a dual role of acting as promoter of innovation as well as being the regulator. While promoting innovation, our focus is on ensuring a well-regulated ecosystem that addresses systemic risks and challenges.

Concluding Observations

It is a matter of satisfaction that the Indian economy has sailed through the turbulent waters smoothly during the recent years. Driven by its inherent dynamism and supported by a prudent policy mix, growth is getting stronger foothold while inflation is also coming under control. Our economic performance also owes a lot to the very calibrated, focused and targeted monetary and fiscal responses since the pandemic.

I must add that in the current uncertain environment, it is best to avoid any sense of complacency. We remain agile and continue to fortify our macroeconomic fundamentals and buffers. Today, the confidence and trust in India's prospects are at an all-time high. To seize the moment, India looks at Japan as a close partner to usher in a new era of growth and prosperity, for both our countries. With Japan as our close partner, I am sure the land of the rising sun will further light up our spirits (with Diwali round the corner), to take our economies and well-being of our people to greater heights. **DI**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A former IAS officer of Tamilnadu cadre, Shakti Kanta Das is presently Governor, Reserve Bank of India. A former Revenue Secretary at the centre, he has been a G20 Sherpa, and actively monitored the 2016 de-monetisation of the Indian Currency.

US FED NOVEMBER POLICY: ANALYTICS AND IMPLICATIONS



by DR. MANORAJAN SHARMA

The central banks across the world were largely on a rate hiking spree for the most part of 2022 and 2023. But given the transformed ground-realities, the evolving course of monetary policy has evoked widespread debate across the development spectrum. Some of the main strands of this debate relate to the impact of hiking interest rates, behaviour of workers, firms and consumers. There are also grave geopolitical risks and if the Israel-Hamas conflict leads to a full-fledged regional conflagration in the Middle East, it will cripple the global economy.

REPEATED RATE HIKES POST MARCH 2022

The US Fed has aggressively raised interest rates 11 times post March 2022, including four in 2023, to check the inflationary spiral. The Fed Reserve's strategy to check inflation rests on the use of its various tools, e.g., Fed funds rate for 2% long term inflation. "Persistent inflation" stems from demand-supply imbalances and expansionary policy of the Fed and the US Government. Inflation hurts consumers, particularly low income families and fixed income groups. The Fed Reserve raised key short-term interest rates repeatedly but with limited success because of "sticky" inflation. There has to be

The Fed Reserve raised key short-term interest rates repeatedly but with limited success because of "sticky" inflation. There has to be a focus on avoiding hard-landing and greater fiscal-monetary coordination. High government spending could complicate matters.

a focus on avoiding hard-landing and greater fiscal-monetary coordination. High government spending could complicate matters.

Such interest rate hikes are part of a global pattern. This thesis can be substantiated by the fact that nine developed economies (with Japan being the notable exception) raised rates by a combined 3,965 basis points (bps) in a cycle that started in September 2021.

The resilience and robustness of the US economy despite a slew of rate hikes unprecedented in four decades surprised several analysts.

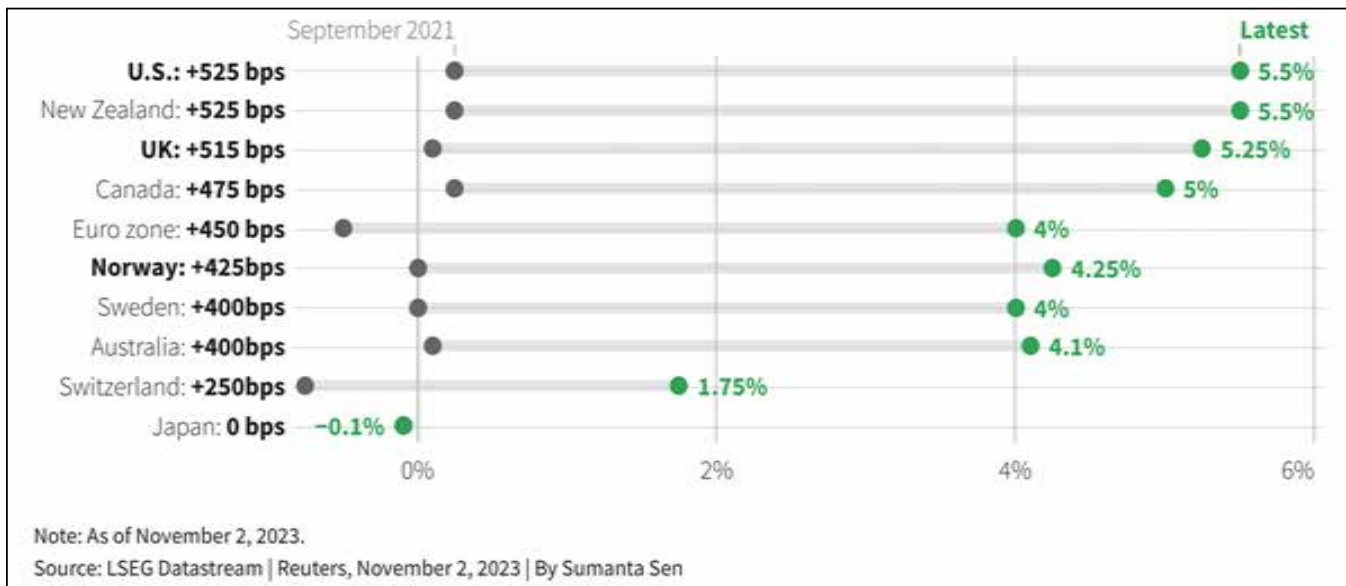
US FED'S NOVEMBER POLICY ACTION

Against this backdrop, the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) on November 1, 2023 kept the rates unchanged for the second consecutive time at 5.25% to 5.5% range (i.e., the highest level in 22 years), where it has been stuck since July 2023. This decision, which occurred against the canvas of a growing economy and labor market and inflation well over the central bank's target, marked a careful move "to address both the risk of being misled by a few good months of data, and the risk of over-tightening". It also gave policymakers time to "assess additional information and its implications for monetary policy".

The traction in the economy is manifested in the growth in gross domestic product (GDP) of the US at an annualised rate of 4.9% in Q3 and nonfarm payrolls growth totalled 336,000 in this quarter. Hence the US central bank justifiably maintained "economic activity expanded at a strong pace in the third quarter".

Meanwhile, the US labour costs rose significantly in the September quarter amid

strong wage growth. In terms of the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the Employment Cost Index (ECI), the broadest measure of labour costs, rose 1.1% in July-September 2023 after rising 1% in April-June 2023.



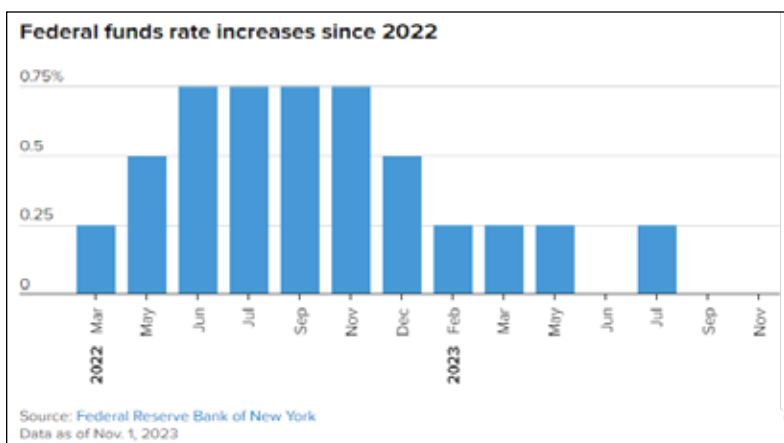
The personal consumption expenditures price index (PCE) rose 3.4% in September and the core PCE price index rose 3.7%. Over 3% inflation strongly suggests that inflation management will endure and rate cuts may still be some distance away.

Resilient economic growth provides comfort to the Fed in keeping interest rates high for some time. But there are also issues of the probable timing of the reversal of the rate hike cycle, the Fed's perception on the job markets, inflation and economic growth and the lagged effect of the cumulative impact of rate hikes on the economy and corporate world.

While the July hike may have been the last in this cycle, financial and geopolitical risks buttress the higher-for-longer stance. The Fed may be close to the end of its rate-hiking cycle but a hike in December 2023 is not entirely ruled out should crude oil prices spike.

MACROECONOMIC IMPACT ON INDIA

The transmission of the Fed's policy on the Indian markets occurs through Exchange Rate Channel, which strengthens the US dollar against other currencies, including Indian rupee and raises the debt servicing costs for Indian borrowers for loans in foreign currency; Capital Flow Channel, which reduces the interest rate differential between the US and India making India less attractive for foreign investors seeking higher returns and could lead to capital outflows from India's equity and debt markets, thereby lowering asset prices and increasing volatility; Inflation Channel by raising the imported inflation because of the higher cost of imported goods such as oil, gold and electronics



While the July hike may have been the last in this cycle, financial and geopolitical risks buttress the higher-for-longer stance. The Fed may be close to the end of its rate-hiking cycle but a hike in December 2023 is not entirely ruled out should crude oil prices spike.

and higher domestic inflation by raising input costs for various sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and services; Growth Channel by decelerating global growth negatively impacting India's exports and external demand and reduced domestic demand and investment.

Data crunching reveals one-month non-deliverable rupee forward at 83.28; on-shore one-month forward premium at 4.75 paise, dollar index falling to 105.50, Brent crude futures at \$79.9 per barrel, Ten-year U.S. note yield at 4.48%, foreign investors sold a net \$37.5 million worth of Indian shares on Nov. 7 and foreign investors bought a net \$179.2 million worth of Indian bonds on Nov. 7, 2023.

While Asian currencies buoyed by dropping U.S. yields post the Fed Policy rose, the Indian rupee was unchanged. But the falling oil prices and sliding U.S. yields contained the upside pressure (in USD/INR).


Brent crude on November 8, 2023 fell below \$80 a barrel for the first time since mid-July on concerns of receding demand in the U.S. and China. Given that India predominantly imports oil, falling oil price augurs well for India. As of November 2, India's average crude oil basket price was \$87.09 per barrel, slightly lower than the October average of \$90.08. Morgan Stanley's note stressed that if oil prices sustainably rise to \$110 per bar-



Two salient features in the Indian equity market are as China's real GDP growth slows down, India is delivering a stronger GDP than China and some pension funds in the U.S. are reallocating their investments with India being the largest recipient, the others being Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Mexico.

redictable shocks', but this guidance did not identify the US economy growth risks.

The IMF has demonstrated that India has high debt but risks are moderate since India's current debt is 81.9% (China 83%) of GDP. Unlike China, India's debt is likely to fall to 80.4% in 2028 because of high growth, long debt maturities, large domestically held debt and denoted in home currency. Rising US Fed rate result in foreign investors selling out from the Indian stock markets as Indian markets become far less attractive for them. The rate hike also positively impacts US treasuries' yield, which motivates foreign investors to pull their money out of the Indian markets and invest it in their own country. Secondly, higher interest rates leading to a weaker rupee vis-a-vis the dollar capping foreign investors returns on their investments. Thirdly, though foreign investors with a long-term horizon look beyond marginal rate hikes, small-term investors retreat because volatile market together with a weaker rupee requires hedging the positions, cutting short the returns. Higher interest rates also raise borrowing costs.

The domestic equity market was not impacted significantly in the wake of leaving the benchmark interest rates unchanged since market participants had already factored in the effects of these record interest rates. JPMorgan's Pedro Martins maintains India has the strongest nominal GDP compounding among emerging markets because of demographic trends and investments in infrastructure. Two salient features in the Indian equity market are as China's real GDP growth slows down, India is delivering a stronger GDP than China and some pension funds in the U.S. are reallocating their investments with India being the largest recipient, the others being Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Mexico. 

rel, it could strain India's macroeconomic stability, inducing the RBI to resume its rate hike cycle.

The 10-year U.S. yield dropped below 4.50%, reaching the lowest in more than a month and is now down more than 50 basis points from its recent high. The Fed Chair suggests greater flexibility on economic forecasting during times of 'unpre-



Pathway to the Future

Where do we go from here? Going forward, the disconcerting macro-economic complexities, such as, tighter financial conditions faced by households and businesses, inflation still to reach 2% on a sustained basis despite the perceptible decline in inflation from its four-decade peak last year, to 3.7% on an annual basis, the need to calibrate an economy outperforming expectations, and the hawkish tone and tenor of the Policy, our sense is that the Fed would adopt a status quoist Policy in their next meeting on December 12-13, 2023. Despite cognizable dilemmas, we do maintain that rate cuts would occur in 2024.

The Fed reaffirmed its commitment to achieving its dual mandate of maximum employment and price stability. In pursuit of this dual mandate, the Fed's data-driven and evidence-based policy would be influenced by the data and information on issues such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI), payrolls, and GDP growth.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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has over 250 publications and six books. His views have been cited in the Associated Press, New York; Dow Jones, New York; International Herald Tribune, New York; Wall Street Journal, New York.

PM FLIES THE TEJAS, LEADING FROM THE FRONT INDIA'S ATMANIRBHAR DRIVE



PM Modi flew the "Made in India" Tejas Twin Seat Light Combat aircraft for a 30 minutes demonstration. Highlighting his self-reliance emphasis, especially in the defence sector, this was a special effort, a first by an Indian prime minister. HAL Bengaluru is building these, and already supplying similar aircraft to the Indian Air Force. But true to our present narrative, this too became the object of much derision and scepticism, some luminaries even suspecting this as a fake. A ride that was more appropriately hailed as a bold step, leading from the front, towards Atmanirbar Bharat.



Indian Eco-system is Ripe to deliver World-class Cancer Cure!

Holistic Medicine, Early Screening and Detection!



The Start of the Indian Odyssey

VIVEK WADHWA: I lost my wife to cancer. We tried every possible means to save her, and I realized how screwed up the American medical system is. I call it corrupt, incompetent, I mean everything bad you would ever say about a third world country. I decided that I'm going to do what I teach. I was teaching advancing technologies, everything from AI to quantum computing. So I said, let's figure out how to cure cancer.

It occurred to me that the best place in the world to do something transformative is India. Why India? Because India has no legacy to protect. So, it took a lot, but I got a meeting with Prime Minister in 2019, and I spent nearly an hour with him. I was amazed at the discussion we had. At the end of it, he told his people, do whatever it takes to help Professor Wadhwa. Another long story, but eventually connected with Venkat Ramachandran, who was the head of TATA Trust and Dr. Moni Abraham Kuriakose is one of the greatest oncologists in the world, and they were looking to transform India's cancer care system by setting up a distributed cancer network. So, we teamed up with the idea to transform not only India's cancer care system, but to make an impact on the whole world.

KEITH FLAHERTY: Well, it's really all about connecting capacities and technologies that is what's already happening and really at a faster pace than I thought imaginable. So, playing that forward over the next two, three years. I think what Vivek is alluding to is that we're at a

The Hindustan Summit 2023 brought some interesting conversations into the national contention. One that caught our attention in particular was the dialogue with Harvard Professor **Keith Flaherty** and Indian entrepreneur **Vivek Wadhwa** specializing in advancing technologies including Ai and quantum computing. Their endeavour to bring advanced cancer care to India and from India to the world would disrupt the entire eco-system by placing emphasis on early detection, breathalyser tests instead of blood tests making it more affordable to check disease. We produce a few extracts from this conversation.

point right now where we have methods for interrogating biospecimens at the DNA RNA protein level that allow us to really see all of the complexity that cancer represents.

VIVEK WADHWA: So Karkinos Healthcare has built already the most advanced cancer

care system in the world, the IT infrastructure that they have. When we told the White House about it, the cancer moonshot about it, they were blown away with the head of the US cancer moonshot Daniel Carnival said was, oh my God, we were talking about this happening in the next five to 10 years. This is what has already been built in India. They're implementing it at a scale that is unprecedented in the world. So, what's happening in India is amazing. Move forward five years, India will have the best cancer care system in the world thanks to the work that the folks at Karkinos is doing. What my colleagues at Karkinos realised is that we're catching cancer too late.

All of you have relatives, friends who you lost to cancer. I'll bet you there's not one person in this audience who has not been impacted by cancer personally. In India it's almost always at stage four when it's too late. You're desperately trying to get drugs which are not available. It's a hopeless cause. So what Venkat and Moni started doing was they started doing early screening because if you can catch cancer at the earliest stage, you can treat it. You can now go back to natural remedies. In India, Ayurveda for example and holistic health are very strong. Well, if you know that you're going to die, if you don't change your lifestyle and habits, you're going to change your lifestyle and habits. What do Indians do normally? They fill themselves up with chemicals and processed foods and smoke and God knows what else. You're killing yourselves rather than going back to your roots and eating healthy food. So this is what becomes possible if you can diagnose at the earlier stages.

Now in reviewing the progress Karkinos has made, they had screened about 1.5 million people over an eight-month period. The trouble is that they're just doing superficial screenings. The poor can't afford blood tests, let alone genetic sequencing. You have very few people in India can afford that.

There was a technology that I had access to in Chile that I had invested in; this converts water into plasma, back into water, the company's Plasma Waters, and they are about to launch the next Green Revolution in India. But a byproduct of that technology is the ability to ionise any fluid. So, what I realized is that we have a chance to disrupt the entire medical diagnostics industry because the way blood testing



“I lost my wife to cancer. We tried every possible means to save her, and I realized how screwed up the American medical system is. I call it corrupt, incompetent, I mean everything bad you would ever say about a third world country. I decided that I'm going to do what I teach. I was teaching advancing technologies, everything from AI to quantum computing. So I said, let's figure out how to cure cancer.”

Vivek Wadha

is done right now, you take a sample of blood, you put it into micro containers and you run immunoassays on it. So, you're testing specifically for certain things. What if you could now convert organic matter into light spectra and then use the advances in AI to analyse that spectra? Well, you need a lot of data for that. You need data at a scale which is not available by any means in the West.

Well, guess what there is AIIMS and Tata Memorial. This is how many patients they'll see in a month. So, India has all the data, it has the need, it has a scientist. So I decided, I'm moving to India because I can do things at a scale which is unimaginable in Silicon Valley.

Indian Sense of Humility, No other Trust like Tata Trust!

KEITH FLAHERTY: I have learned that entrepreneurs, scientists and doctors in India through the lens of interacting with Karkinos





“Well, it’s really all about connecting capacities and technologies that is what’s already happening and really at a faster pace than I thought imaginable. So, playing that forward over the next two, three years. I think what Vivek is alluding to is that we’re at a point right now where we have methods for interrogating biospecimens at the DNA RNA protein level that allow us to really see all of the complexity that cancer represents.”

Keith Flaherty

and now through those interactions now interacting with more and more of each of those constituents beyond Karkinos, if you will, at the publicly funded health institutions and research institutions and the like. They have a really disorienting sense of humility, disorienting for a westerner because humility is not a thing that is a cultural norm. The point being that what was happening then was quietly, somewhat out of our view because we couldn’t come to India until the beginning of 2023 when Covid cleared enough, was that this team rising out of the Tata Trust, which I want to emphasize that there is no Tata Trust anywhere else in the world.

I mean, I just want to be very clear, having travelled the world, doing the work that I do, trying to advance science to medicine in oncology, there’s nothing like it. And that foundation and that culture and those people being the very ones who then were responsible for creating this now for-profit company, but one that behaves in a way that’s not at all like a for-profit company that I’ve ever interacted with. Basically, what they’ve enabled to

do is put together infrastructure, five laboratories that are absolutely cutting edge molecular diagnostic laboratories. They’ve launched these population-based screening campaigns. The numbers are astonishing and exponentially rising. Of course, the Indian population is astonishingly large, though the numbers need to exponentially rise. And as I witnessed their ability to create this capacity, bring together the technology in these laboratories to bring technology and here, I mean not biomedical research technology, but what India is so wealthy in which is tech knowledge, knowhow and tools.

And to bring that for the purpose of screening rural populations who’ve never been approached ever before for cancer screening. We saw this witnessed for the first time in January in a three city, three state week-long tour ending here in Delhi. And it just became clear to me that we’re in the West, and again, US, Europe put it all together. We face headwind. We are up against impediment after impediment in terms of doing these things that are obvious that need to be done where you need numbers to be able to actually really unpack the complexity of cancer biology, develop new diagnostic tools for early detection. And here there’s tailwind. I mean there’s just something fundamentally culturally different. And the alignment from government to publicly funded research institutions to physicians, to companies, it’s astonishing.

VIVEK WADHWA: I want to add one more thing about Indian culture and values. Venkat and Moni, I just mentioned them, they’re donating the majority of their stock to a trust for cancer patients. They’re taking nothing about it. The humility. The White House, when Modi came to the US a few months ago, they announced that the US and India are going to be working together on cancer.

Karkinos Healthcare has built already the most advanced cancer care system in the world, the IT infrastructure that they have. what’s happening in India is amazing. Move forward five years, India will have the best cancer care system in the world thanks to the work that the folks at Karkinos is doing.



And Karkinos was actually mentioned in the White House press announcement, Venkat and Moni won't even talk about it. Humility. I said, Venkat, what's wrong with you? He says, no, our actions have to speak for themselves. I said, Venkat you need to promote what you're doing because otherwise no one's going to know who you are or what you are. I mean the value system that you have here of people who are doing good for the world, you don't see anywhere else in the world. The fact is that this is the beauty of Indian culture and values. It's all about giving back.

PM Modi and his Magic Wand!

VIVEK WADHWA: So when I met Prime Minister Modi in 2019, I walked him through what was happening. I was amazed. I was told, here's what you can do with the PM. Don't talk too fast. Don't say this. Don't say that. Modi and I were like friends talking to each other by the time we were done and his people were panicked. That the way I was talking to Modi, I was talking, literally talking to him as a friend. And then I came back and I said, dear prime minister, I want to thank you for what you enabled. I said, it's only because of you that I put the grand plan together. It's only because of you that I got this advisory group together. It's only because of you that we are helping Karakinos and you have made all of this possible. He was just amazing.

KEITH FLAHERTY: I mean, it was astonishing. We don't have public figures like that in the United States, so it was hard to be prepared for that meeting. We'd been told, if you're lucky, 15 minutes, the Prime Minister is a busy man. We had 50 minutes, where he was directing the conversation, probing the areas, and really looking around the corner, if you will, where this is all headed. Now, basically we have the opportunity to actually have India be the hub, and ultimately coming from Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts, which are right immediately next to each other, which is the world's biomedical research capital. There's nothing even close to it. The next biotech hub, at least for cancer research, is going to be here. PM Modi saw it as clearly as we did and that type of vision and the conversations that we had the day before with the heads of each relevant ministry across.



Accessibility to the global south?

VIVEK WADHWA: Well, you talking about bionics. I mean, my ambition is to be able to detect every disease. Just like when genetic sequencing first happened with DNA was sequenced. We turned biology into letters. I'm turning biology into light, and the magic happens here. When you train your AI. India we have all the data we need.

Literally, my goal is a hundred rupees to do a test and not only a blood test. I'm going to start with breath test because like TB and others, there are a lot of diseases you can detect in the breath itself. Certain cancers you can detect in the breath.



“My ambition is to be able to detect every disease. Just like when genetic sequencing first happened with DNA was sequenced. We turned biology into letters. I’m turning biology into light, and the magic happens here. When you train your AI. India we have all the data we need.”

Vivek Wadha



Some cancers may not show up in the breath for that. You may have to do blood tests.

But my goal is to detect every disease because it’s become an AI problem. Actually, that’s the magic of AI. And I also learned Hardik Shah told me yesterday that the Prime Minister is planning to spend \$800 million, nearly a billion dollars on setting up an AI infrastructure in India. So, if India does that, it has the data, it has the people. India could become, well, not only lead the world in curing cancer, it could become the world’s AI hub in the next three or four years. If everything goes the way expected, it’s going to be. Because solving the grand challenges of humanity now is a data problem. And AI enables you to understand data and if you have the skills and everything necessary, magic can happen. So, this is India’s opportunity.

Breathalyzer for cancer?

KEITH FLAHERTY: So basically the method that Vivek is describing is distinct from our other ways of trying to analyse biological specimens in that we go hunting for specific types of analytes, if you will. So, the early detection methods that have been really, I would say exploding in terms of the evidence that they can find cancers that we could never find early before, but not as reliably as we’d like these tests to work. They try to pick up. So-called circulating tumour, DNA. So, from a relatively early point in cancer formation,

DNA is shed from tumour cells. DNA is also shed from other non-tumour cells of course. And those are rare events, if you will, in a small early cancer. And if you put your blinders on and you’re only looking for that type of analyte, you’re giving up a lot of the potential detection power. This method is essentially agnostic to what the analyte is. So regardless of the nature of a complex macromolecule or a specific small molecule or even a simple analyte like sodium, this method basically can detect all of those species in a way that current methods that manipulate a specimen before analyzing spectra don’t allow. So basically, this sort of unmanipulated approach allows you to basically take a specimen, vary the temperature, vary the pressure, and vary the power supply.

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Across those three dimensions, basically understand through the photo spectra, the surface features of all of these molecules again in three dimensions. So, there’s a depth that this method can probe that no other method that we have currently can.

Cancer is complex. I mean it’s an inflammatory disease. It’s a disease where there’s a lot of communication going on between the tumour cells and non-tumor cells in the

body. That leaks out, if you will, into the bloodstream why we think the blood is such ultimately an important compartment to be able to characterize. And again, this method can potentially wrestle down that complexity. So, we’re all very excited. But these approaches, including the blood-based early detection methods I mentioned in the West, they are going to take a decade to advance in the West based on our inability to pull together diagnostic technology screening, broad-based population screening, patient’s data and their outcomes. These things can’t come together. And when we talk to the companies that are developing these blood-based methods that I referred to about

this enterprise since this visit in January, their jaws drop and every one of them is lining up to basically partner with this platform that is itself a company.

Seeking Partnerships to Make it Work!

VIVEK WADHWA: My goal is within a year to prove the technology and I'm going to have several devices available to different universities. This is why I met the AIIMS researchers, brilliant faculty. I'm going to make it available to them, let them do the discoveries. I think within a year I'll be able to prove the technology. It's going to happen from India, made in India, research in India, papers published in India. That's what my goal is.

KEITH FLAHERTY: India can drive a diagnostic revolution on its own effectively based on all, everything we've talked about so far. Where we need partnership is in the therapeutics. Access to therapeutics in India is a major problem. Very impactful cancer therapies that when applied, particularly early here, I mean specifically drugs, they are out of the reach of the vast, vast majority of Indians. And that's unacceptable. To make this whole research engine that we've talked about work in the population of patients once they're diagnosed with cancer, we need access to therapies and for that we need partnership. And so, I'm campaigning, I am petitioning, imploring my colleagues in pharma and biotech to rise to this opportunity. And again, I need all the help I can get.

Vision for the future?

VIVEK WADHWA: I want to cure every disease. I want to first of all, prevent it from happening, catch it early because yes, therapeutics, but I also believe in Ayurveda. I believe there's a health wealth of knowledge here, which by which we can start treating ourselves in holistic ways. So, I'm a big fan of holistic. So yes, I'm working with the scientists and I believe in western medicine, but I also believe in Indian/eastern medicine. So, I want to see us living healthier lifestyles, being able to diagnose disease and then to cure all disease. This is what I want to see happen in the next decade. That's my vision for medicine.

KEITH FLAHERTY: This hyper collaborative model that we've tried to describe it is going to set the example for the world, the model that's being created here, and literally the digital platforms that tie it all together. They are going to be portable to even more challenging environments to navigate Africa. They're also going to be ported to the United States and Europe. This concept, this hyper collaborative concept, it could



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“Now, basically we have the opportunity to actually have India be the hub. The next biotech hub, at least for cancer research, is going to be here. PM Modi saw it as clearly as we did and that type of vision and the conversations that we had the day before with the heads of each relevant ministry across.”

Keith Flaherty

not have been started in the United States, but it can certainly be borrowed by the United States. So, I am here to try to do the work that I've been trying to do in the United States because it's going to happen here first, and that's going to have global benefit, as I say, sort of upstream and downstream, if you will. India, of course, itself has everything, which is to say everything from poverty to wealth, has every dimension, if you will, all packed into one very large populated country. So, I really think this sort of what we're describing is an end to end solution that is going to have global relevance. **Di**

ABOUT

Dr. Keith Flaherty is Director of Clinical Research at the Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center, and Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School.

Vivek Wadhwa is a Distinguished Fellow at Harvard Law School's Labor and Work life Program. In 2018, he was a recipient of Silicon Valley Forum's Visionary Award for his contributions to Silicon Valley's technology ecosystem.

CAPTURING MILESTONES

This year's film festival, it's 54th edition, brought focus on OTT platforms, new age cinema and creativity

The screens came down at the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), a festive celebration held in Goa for the past 19 years with a glittering closing ceremony at Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Stadium on November 28. This year's IFFI was the 54th internationally, and 20th in Goa, as it was brought to this tourist state by the then dynamic Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar in 2003. Kicking off in Goa with a starry opening ceremony on November 20 at the hands of Union (I&B), Youth Affairs and Sports, **Anurag Singh Thakur**, the festival had important announcements about incentives for those in the film industry in India and abroad. The curtains raised in the distinguished presence of The Chief Minister of Goa **Dr Pramod Sawant** in the presence of Minister of State (MoS) for I&B **Dr L Murugan**, MoS for Tourism **Shripad Naik** and actor and MP **Sunny Deol**, actors including **Shahid Kapoor**, **Khushbu Sundar** and many other dignitaries. Several prominent Indian and international film personalities also graced the nine-day event.





Madhuri Dixit, Michael Douglas feted

On the occasion, the legendary Indian actress Madhuri Dixit was honoured with 'Special Recognition to Bharatiya Cinema' Award and glorifying this moment, Thakur appreciated her contribution to the Indian silver screen with words on X, "An icon across the ages, Madhuri Dixit has graced our screens with unparalleled talent for four incredible decades." Thakur also congratulated Hollywood actor/producer Michael Douglas for having been conferred with the prestigious 'Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement' Award for 2023. A legendary actor with 50 celebrated years of film, television and producing experience, Douglas is known for his era-defining roles, dedicated public service record and enduring cultural impact. He is recognized for his roles in films such as Wall Street, Fatal Attraction, The China Syndrome, The American President, Basic Instinct, and Ant-Man.



Text by **BHARATI PAWASKAR** and
Photographs by **NARAYAN PISSURLENKAR**

Breakthrough Announcements on Policy and Film Making Incentives

The ear-catching announcements by Anurag Singh Thakur included India will increase the incentive for foreign film production in the country to 40% of the expenses incurred with an increased cap limit of ₹30 crore. Earlier, the per project cap for the incentives was only ₹2.5 crore, so this is huge including additional 5% bonus for significant Indian content. The announcement is a part of the efforts to streamline foreign film productions and to ensure ease of doing business in India. International productions that have been granted shooting permission by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Ministry of External Affairs (for documentaries only) after April 1, 2022, will be eligible for this incentive scheme. The above incentives will be distributed in two stages (interim and final). The final disbursement claim can be made once the project is complete in India. Incentives will be provided on the recommendation of a Special Incentive Evaluation Committee. Film Facilitation Office (FFO) set up under the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) is executing this incentive scheme. FFO acts as a single-window facilitation and clearance mechanism that eases filming in India, as well as endeavouring to create a film-friendly ecosystem and promoting the country as a filming destination.

The services rendered by the FFO have now been extended to Indian filmmakers as well. The announcement and the policy interventions in the sector are aimed at boosting the economy, creating jobs and promote tourism and culture in the country. The sunrise industries like AVGC: Animation, Visual Effects and Postproduction services are also expected to benefit from the recent incentives in the film sector. Reasoning out that there was a need for a higher incentive to attract medium and big budget international projects to the country considering India's size and vast potential, Thakur stated, "This paradigm shift in incentivising film production serves as a testament to India's commitment and support for artistic expression and reinforces our position as a preferred destination for cinematic endeavours."

The Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2023, received approval recently from both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, paving way to broaden the legal framework, shifting its focus beyond censorship to encompass copyright protection and to introduce rigorous measures against piracy.



75 Creative Minds of Tomorrow

The Union I&B Minister also announced a recruitment drive for the young minds who were selected in the '75 Creative Minds of Tomorrow', opening doors to limitless opportunities for their blossoming talents and career trajectories. The '75 Creative Minds of Tomorrow', now in its third edition, was born in 2021 from the Prime Minister's vision to provide the youth with a platform to showcase their creative expression through the medium of cinema. This year, out of around 600 entries across 10 categories, 75 young filmmakers were hand-picked from 19 states. The participants were all under the age of 35 and the youngest of them was Shashwat Shukla from Mumbai, who is just 18, and is in the music composing and sound design category. These 75 young creative talents from all over India took the 'Film Challenge' to make a short film in 48 hours at IFFI-54 venue. These young minds also interacted with the Union I&B Minister Anurag Singh Thakur along with members of the global film fraternity present at IFFI and had a chance to witness the business of cinema at the Film Bazaar. Another heart-warming addition was, this year's IFFI featured films from 40 remarkable women filmmakers, allowing their talent, creativity, and unique perspectives to be a part of the festival as a celebration of diverse voices and narratives.

New Awards spell New Horizons

A new category of awards was announced too – Best Web Se-

ries (OTT) Category. And for the first time IFFI augmented the scope of Film Bazaar by introducing a well-curated VFX and Tech Pavilion to showcase the latest innovations from the cinema world, and a documentary section to its co-production market to support non-fiction storytelling. Sharing his vision, I&B minister said that his vision is not limited to one event, but what IFFI should be when India celebrates its 100th year of Independence once we transit from Amrit Mahotsav to Amrit Kaal. Underlying the significant role of cinema as a uniting force, Thakur said, "I strongly believe that throughout its history, cinema has captured and chiselled ideas, imaginations and innovation such that it forms the driving force for peace, progress and prosperity in a world which is increasingly distressed with division."

IFFI and the Goan Impact: Or, its Impact on Goa

Goa hosts International Film Festival of India (IFFI) since 2004 but the common man on the street is still wondering what this has to do with him. Has his life changed in anyway, apart from witnessing the fiesta that goes on for 10 days in the capital city, disrupting the lives of hundreds who come daily to the city to work? Could a prominent film culture take any roots here? Has it raised the bar for more enthusiasts who made an entry in this field and tried their luck? Or has it created more jobs for actors, studio owners, cinematographers, musicians, set designers, dress designers, make-up artists, singers, directors, or technicians?

Sadly, the answer is no. And there is more than one reason for the overall lethargy that has grappled the minds of Goans who are struggling to set their feet in the film industry. There is not a single organisation in Goa where film related persons meet, mingle, or discuss their issues. Goa has no platform to resolve issues of film makers, actors, or technicians. There are no schemes implemented by the government for the budding filmmakers. There were a handful of schemes existing some decades ago, but they vanished.

The political leaders do spell out schemes and promises of helping the film fraternity in the state but nothing concrete has yet come out of these assurances, laments Goan filmmaker Joywin Fernandes who has done 14 Konkani films from 2004 to 2023. The atmosphere in Goa is not conducive for film makers, actors, musicians, singers as there is no return, and the theatre rents are high, opines Joywin whose hopes have sprouted now with the new announcements of incentives by the Union I&B Minister which are expected to attract more filmmakers towards this land of sun, sand, and sunshine.

The film culture in Goa seems to be on a small scale, but locals are hopeful of seeing it



grow. Here, finance is always the issue, not creativity. There are several talented filmmakers, producers, directors, actors, singers or musicians, and cinematographers in Goa. But there is less exposure to film culture, and though IFFI has been here for two decades, no incentives were shelled out to boost Goan film industry, claim local filmmakers who do small-budget films.

Goa needs events that attract the rest of the country and world to come here. So, whether its National Games or IFFI, locals would welcome all events. However, the managing of these events must be done well. Goans as well as outsiders should not be inconvenienced due to traffic, transportation, stay etc. If the government can work on these areas, then Goa can emerge and prosper as an ideal venue for any event of national/international significance.

A Well-Organized Event: IFFI Scores High!

As an event, IFFI Festival did well. The crowd at the theatres was pretty good. The ticket booking system was smooth for those who understood that booking early and fast would get their hands on the tickets and the seats. The momentum was smooth at the theatres, except for the big queues. People seemed to be accommodative. The crowd was mixed (of all ages) which was good to see. The movies were spaced out well but travelling and getting good seats was an issue for those who were picky. If not picky, then one could make it for his/her show. The one-hour standing in the queue was mandatory at all theatre venues, but time flew for those who were eager to watch the movie of their choice.

The fees for the normal IFFI delegates were around ₹1000-1200 which was affordable, most said. This included a cloth bag (empty) with no brochure or any material. Not all



could lay their hands on the 360-page IFFI booklet, which was distributed on displaying the ID card on stalls outside the ESG complex. However, as there was no scanning done of the IDs, there was no registration of the names who got the booklet. Many were seen complaining about not receiving the booklet. The IFFI bag should have had the booklet, so that it would have gone to all who had registered their names as delegates.

Sharing her experience a delegate asserted, "There were days I thought that all the best masterclasses and films were lined up on the same day. Many good films overlapped with each other so at the end I just decided to choose whatever movies I know will not show up on any OTT platforms anytime soon, said a delegate who had turned up for the second time at IFFI, after her last year's participation. "This is only my second time at IFFI, so I am unsure of how things have always been. But I think this time IFFI has attracted a wider audience to the point that it almost seems like an extension of Goa's tourism. Which may be a plus for the state but that also means fewer parking spaces because of the traffic," she opined.

"I think the Indian movies could be differently curated. The Malayalam picks were great. I think IFFI this time may have unnecessarily roped in a lot of Hindi films that are straight up mainstream just because they are new or because they can invite the celebrity cast," quipped a film lover from Kerala, adding, "I think that IFFI has become more touristy as compared to how it was specifically for cinema enthusiasts before."



Conversations at IFFI



Acting makes one a better human being: **Pankaj Tripathi**

An enriching masterclass session with actor Pankaj Tripathi, in collaboration with the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Kolkata, was moderated by film critic and journalist, Mayank Shekhar. Reflecting on the art of acting, Pankaj Tripathi said, "The world is a theatre, and we play different roles in our lives. Acting is the recreation of real-life roles and emotions. One needs to be empathetic in becoming a proficient actor," According to him, acting serves a broader purpose: to make individuals better human beings by understanding diverse perspectives.

"When you put yourselves in someone's shoes, and understand their thoughts, their emotions, and their perspectives, you also become a better human. This happens when you analyse, observe and understand the good and bad of others' lives and learn from them to make yourself better," he said.

He highlighted the significance of aligning the body and mind for natural acting. "Flexibility and openness of mind and body are crucial to moulding oneself according to the character. The recreation of emotions on the screen can happen only when you force a hypothetical situation of the character in the

brain and train yourself to do so."

He pointed out, "An actor can always take the opportunity for experimentation with their role. The actor underscored the importance of experimentation, distinguishing between an actor's freedom to explore roles and the constraints of stardom which create an expectation and a larger-than-life image in the minds of the audience. Experimentation keeps acting alive.

Filmmaking is an organic journey: **Madhur Bhandarkar**

Filmmaker, scriptwriter, and producer Madhur Bhandarkar, in conversation with film critic and analyst, Taran Adarsh, offered insightful cinematic exchange into the art of cinema, the nuances of filmmaking, and the challenges and inspirations that shape storytelling. Renowned for his distinctive films, Bhandarkar shared an array of perceptive insights, illuminating the essence of authentic storytelling and the intricacies of cinematic creation.

Emphasizing the organic nature of filmmaking, Bhandarkar championed the notion that failure is an integral part of the creative process. "Filmmaking is an organic journey where failure serves as a stepping stone towards success. It's indispensable in crafting superior content," he expressed, adding, "A film stems from an idea. Realistic cinema holds a significant place in the cinematic landscape. Realistic films have the power to resonate deeply with audiences, navigating the duality of being both artistic and commercially impactful."

Theatre is an actor's medium; film is that of the director: **Manoj Bajpayee**

Hindi film 'Gulmohar', written and directed by Rahul Chittella, featured in the 'Indian Panorama' category, explores the meaning of family and home, interweaving individual storylines of various members of the Batra family. While interacting with media Manoj Bajpayee, the lead actor of 'Gulmohar' said that the family atmosphere created by the director on the sets served as a workshop, for shooting a heart touching film on 'family'.

"Family and its feeling extended well beyond the shooting. We were playing father, son, daughter, mother in front of the camera. After the shoot, we used to get together as a family sharing ideas, laughter, and food. This atmosphere has helped all young actors to stay in the role and understand all finer things about the character. The film is depicting fam-



ily, its members and their interpersonal relations. This could not have been achieved without this atmosphere," added Bajpayee.

Bajpayee said that he always considered himself as a theatre actor first and recalled that it was Shekhar Kapoor who encouraged him in the path of films by underlining the difficulties theatre artists might face with regards to monetary compulsions of the future. Highlighting the significance of the theatre he said, "Theatre is an actor's medium in contrast to films, which is director's medium. I find it very difficult to take credit for my performance when I am part of a film, because I know deep down that it is led by a director's vision."

There is no formula for acting: **Vijay Sethupathi**

During an engaging 'In-Conversation' session at Kala Academy, actor Vijay Sethupathi, alongside actress Kushboo Sundar shared insights into their experiences and reflections on their cinematic journey. Sethupathi, one of the most versatile actors of the Indian film industry has acted in more than 50 films. His first lead role in Seenu Ramasamy's Thenmerku Paruvakratru won three National awards. Discussing his journey about his acting skills, Sethupathi exclaimed, "I know that I don't know" and revealed that his preparation for roles involves learning from discussions and arguments with great minds in the film fraternity. He emphasized that audiences are drawn to the story and characters rather than the star of the film. When asked about acting, he stressed the importance of giving freedom to the mind and 'to go with the flow' saying, "There is no formula for acting. One must fully immerse themselves in living the character.

There are only two types of films – good and bad: **Dr T S Nagabharana**

"Since 1979, I have been part of Indian Panorama at IFFI, witnessing its evolution with nine feature films. The panorama mirrors the nation's cultural diversity and visual literacy growth. As a cinema enthusiast this journey serves as an invaluable study of India's cinematic landscape and societal transformations," stated Dr T S Nagabharana, the Jury chairperson of Indian Panorama Feature Films.

Stating that there are only two types of films – good and bad, Nagabharana added, "A good movie is the one which touches, moves, make us think twice and has a lasting impression till we die. The entire Jury critically analysed the films based on the 'cinema language' and the heart of the movie. Whether fortunate or not, as filmmakers our perspectives inevitably vary. Yet, the essence lies in comprehending the heart of cinema, its language and essence. Amidst our differences, none of us questioned each other's understanding.



Always tried to portray Indian women as strong characters in my films: **Rani Mukerji**

A captivating In-Conversation session with the Hindi film actress, Rani Mukerji, exploring the theme of 'Delivering Compelling Performances' was held at 54th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa today. Moderated by Baradwaj Rangan, Editor-in-Chief of Galatta Plus and a National Award-winning Film Critic, the freewheeling discussion delved into Mukerji's life and illustrious career.

Reflecting on her cinematic journey, Rani said that she always tried to portray Indian women as strong characters. "Outside India, films and their characters are viewed as windows towards our Indian culture," she added.

Emphasizing the importance of commitment to one's craft, the accomplished actress asserted, "It is important to always stand by strong films and roles. Sometimes you might not get the audience's approval at that period of time. But in the history of cinema, such films and characters will find a place."

Rani Mukerji also highlighted the significance of versatility for an actor. Elaborating on its significance, she said, "If an actor is versatile, they can portray different facets of life. The more diverse I can make my characters, it will be more interesting for the audience and me. This diversity in characters also inspires me."

Delving into the intricacies of character portrayal, Rani shared, "For doing particular roles, actors often meet real-life people to get their physical characteristics right. But it is also important to know what all emotions they are going through. What distinguishes a scene in a film is the emotions behind the scene. It is important to portray the emotions for it to reach the audience's heart."

On the topic of ageism in the film industry, the renowned actress opined that actors need to acknowledge their age and accept roles that suit their age for the audience to receive them. She added that the audience helped her to break ageism and other barriers in the film industry.

Sharing her personal reflection, Rani remarked, "I don't give much importance to the age factor and tried to do justice to my characters. Fifty percent of your battle of making people believe in the character is won if you look like the character."

While expressing contentment with her journey, the celebrated actress revealed that she never regret doing any characters in her cinema life. "But it was unfortunate that I couldn't be part of Aamir Khan's first production venture film 'Lagaan' due to a date clash," she added.

From 'Tina Malhotra' in Kuch Kuch Hota Hai to 'Maya Talwar'

in Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna and 'Debika Chatterjee' in Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway, Rani Mukerji has enthralled the audience with hundreds of beautiful characters. On the question of her favourite character that she has played, she revealed that the character in the film 'Black' is closest to her heart, illuminating that the character transformed her and helped her to be a better human being. "The character of 'Michelle McNally' in Black inspired and challenged me at the same time. The character in 'Mehndi' also empowered me", she added.

This is the best time for Indian cinema industry: **Michael Douglas**

India is investing more money into production of movies in the last few years under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting Anurag Singh Thakur, said the legendary Hollywood actor and film producer Michael Douglas in an interaction with media at IFFI 54. Michael Douglas was bestowed with the prestigious Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award at the closing ceremony. The iconic actor further said that this is the best time for Indian cinema industry, and the representation of more than 78 foreign countries in IFFI 54 is the reflection of its strength. "Indian films are renowned all around the world and are travelling more and more to the various corners of the world. Streaming platforms are playing an important part in this growth," he added. Highlighting the role of movies in uniting the world, Douglas said that movies share same language and brings us closer together. "The audience from all around the world can understand what is going on in movies. Movies create this international connection. This is the magic, beauty and joy of this industry and that's why I love this business very much," he shared. Sharing his joy on being awarded the Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award, the two time Academy award winner said that it is a tremendous honour to receive this prestigious award. In a recollection of his college days, he candidly shared that he had studied the works of Satyajit Ray like Pather Panchali and Charulata in his film course and getting an award named after him is special. "Ray's pictures were so interesting and they portrayed reality. The greatness of Ray is that he was not only a director, but also a writer, film editor, musician, all at the same time," he reminisced.



Speaking about his father Kirk Douglas, acclaimed American actor and filmmaker, the five time Golden Globe Award winner said that stepping out of his father's shadow took a very long time. "During earlier part of my career, I was playing softer kind of roles. People used to compare me with my father," he said.

India dear to our heart and welcomed us with open arms: Catherine Zeta Jones

Michael Douglas's wife and the multi-award winning actress Catherine Zeta Jones who also joined the media interaction said that India is very dear to her heart and family. Sharing a personal connection with India, Catherine shared a story of an Indian doctor saving her life when she was 18 months old. The BAFTA Award winning actress also revealed her love for Indian films and expressed her interest to be part of Bollywood films. Talking about Indian movies, 'The Lunchbox' is one of my favourite Indian movies. I watched it twice back to back. The film really touched me." She also shared her liking for the Bollywood movie 'Om Shanti Om' which she has watched many time with her family and friends. The National Award winning producer and founder of Percept Ltd Shailendra Singh was also present on the occasion. He remarked that "Life is incomplete without cinema," reflecting on his long journey of 25 years in the film business.



As technology becomes more accessible, more Goan films will come out. A bit more exposure on the national and international platform (like IFFI) will give the much-needed boost to local film making culture. While it is mostly festive, networking can be done if IFFI creates a good platform (like Film Bazaar). But movie-goers like me have no interest or idea about the Film Bazaar. We only watch movies, go for Masterclass or In-conversation sessions, opined a delegate who travelled from South Goa every day for all the nine-days of the festival. **Di**

ABOUT

This feature was commissioned by The Goan, leading daily; said to be the fastest growing newspaper in the city. The writer and photographer work with The Goan.

THE 'AGONY' AFTER THE 'ECSTASY'

AS CRICKET INDIA FALTER AT THE LAST HURDLE, SMASHING A BILLION HOPES!

The 'ecstasy' of the ten won games ended in 'agony' for a billion plus cricket crazy Indians. The home team under-performed in the last game, proving how cricket remains unpredictable. After all, it is just another facet of 'life', you can never tell how it will end! The loss apart, India did do well, with hopes moving on to the next generation of young cricketers.

By SAMEER KACHRU

I write this article with a very heavy heart and teary eyes as well. The true Team India supporter, Massive "deshbhakt" and the insanely fanatic cricket nerd in me rues the fact as to what could have been, but then also wants to celebrate what joy Team India gave to the nation during the 2023 Cricket World Cup. There was pride and honour galore and without any prejudice during this campaign.

For the grand finale in Ahmedabad, special trains plied between key cities, schools postponed their examinations and corporate offices were given offs as well. The entire nation was waiting for the inevitable to happen – India being crowned as the ICC WC Champions of the 2023 edition. Alas!

The euphoria has ended. The dream is shattered, but so are many cricketing records in this World Cup. Many of the records are now owned by our men in Blue. India has done the unthinkable by winning ten games in a row and with consummate ease, that too. Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma have re-iterated to the world as to why they are both GOATs of World Cricket. India's pace bowling attack has venom like never seen before with the current fast bowling trio that exhibited raw pace, excellent control and a lot of bite. India's middle order batting department delivered with so much ease throughout their campaign.

On that day of the Final, the Indian Team lost to a better team in all the departments. That is the harsh and unfortunate truth. Was India the best team and the deserved winner



What a Win?



PM Modi in the dressing room after the game; a touching moment for the cricketers, who had fought hard and yet not won!



The Indian team together in traditional kurtas, not their blues; a rare photo where recognising them individually becomes an exercise.

of the title? This will be debated till the cows come home. After all, four Indian batters feature in the top ten run getters of this edition and the highest wicket taker of the tournament is an Indian as well.

As Indians, we would like to believe that the World Cup was snatched from our clutches with just the one bad game. That is sport. Be it individual or a team game, sport is not scripted and it has that element of suspense that makes it sticky. Most importantly, there is more than skill needed to lift a global trophy.

Having said that, one cannot help but feel heartbroken especially for Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma. I am sure they wanted to bid their World Cup careers a glorious goodbye a la Sachin Tendulkar style in 2011. These two GOATs along with Rahul Dravid deserved to win the World Cup, after the way they had stitched together a fabulous well rounded unit and actually took on the mantle to play their roles so effectively.

Before we dissect the “could have been” scenarios further on in this article, let’s delve into what was achieved by Team India in this World Cup. These stats are truly startling. India pretty much owned this World Cup on personal performances.

- Most Wins in the Tournament - India
- Best Net Run Rate - India
- Most Runs – V. Kohli
- Most wickets – M. Shami
- Highest average – V. Kohli
- Most fours – V. Kohli
- Most sixes – Rohit Sharma
- Most fifties – V. Kohli
- Best bowling figure – M. Shami



Most five-wicket haul – M. Shami
 Best bowling Strike Rate – M. Shami
 Best bowling Average – M. Shami

The Man of the Series was awarded to Virat Kohli. Enroute, he conquered the 50th century landmark as well, overtaking Sachin. No one including Virat Kohli celebrated these mammoth personal achievements.

King Kohli eclipsed Sachin Tendulkar's record of 2003 where he amassed 673 runs in a single World Cup edition. Virat scored 765 runs at a staggering average of 95.62 and yet did not lift the trophy. Both God & King lost to the might of Australia in the finals!

Add additional records, specifically the other outstanding milestones achieved by the Indians.

Mohd Shami is now the Fastest Bowler Ever to 50 Wickets in ODI World Cups. Just the 17 Innings taken to do this. He also owns the Best ODI Bowling figures by an Indian with the 7-wicket haul he took.

Rohit Sharma now has 7 centuries at ICC World Cups and scored 597 runs in this edition.

Shreyas Iyer scored 530 runs at an average of 66 and resolved the India's Number 4 spot concern.

KL Rahul batted an average of 75 and amassed 452 Runs this time around.

58 wickets were taken by the pace trio of Shami (24), Bumrah (20) & Siraj (14) in the 11 games. That's a serious significant impact on a campaign that was held on Indian soil where pacers traditionally do not prosper.

So, what really happened in the Final?

Winning a Big Moment is not about "not panicking"; rather it is about panicking a bit less than the other guys. Hope you get what that means. The butterflies will be there. It is the World Cup Final after all. But, India were taught the same lesson two decades ago in South Africa by the Aussies.

If you draw parallels between the 2003 and the 2023 World Cup Final, there are a lot of commonalities. Australia won both because of their unabashed ruthless outlook towards the game. India got downed this time by Travis Head, who mind you is quite a big match Player.

Travis Head is a player and a half!

South Africa had to succumb to his brilliance as he took 2 wickets and smashed a quick fire 62 in the Semi Finals this World Cup. Not to forget the 137 not out against





India in the Finals. Both of these were Man of the Match performances.

But, cast back to the WTC Finals in 2023 as well, where again a boisterous Australian attack ripped apart the Number 1 Test Nation India to win that too. It was Travis Head there too with the bat though. He walked away winning the Man of the Match in that Final again, thanks to his blistering knock of 163. This guy is made for the Big occasions.

Who dares Wins!

Australia won the big moments. They ceased them with clarity of thought and the killer instinct that has won them their sixth record breaking title out of the thirteen world cups. It's actually a 46% chance of Australia winning a World Cup each time it is held. Isn't that just staggering as a number for one country to dominate a particular sport.

Flash back to the Finals and review some startling reasons as to why Australia are such champions;

Pat Cummins had the guts to play mind games in the pre match press conference where he was going to want to silence the world's largest stadium cheering for its home team – India.

The Aussie team management understood the nature of the pitch



and its changing nature as the dew would fall in latter part of the day. Hence, making it easier to bat second.

Australia picked to bowl first in a big final. Chasing in the Narendra Modi Stadium against not eleven, but one lac plus people wearing a sea of blue is a daunting thought in the first place.

India were not allowed to get any boundaries in the middle overs and were actually tactically forced to a below par total. India buckled down and resorted to not offering any big hits and left the bowlers with a lot to do under lights.

Australia came out swinging hard. Losing Warner, Marsh and Smith did not deter the approach at all.

Australia backed Travis Head even though he has failed initially. Did he come through for them.

Bottom line. They dared and they Won. Never count out Australia in any of the global events.

**“Float Like a Butterfly, Sting Like a Bee”:
Muhammad Ali**

Did Australia do that or what in the 2023 World Cup? They were never supposed to wear the crown at the start of the global tournament. Neither did they make a handsome start to their campaign with the initial losses. In fact, they convincingly lost a home ODI series to India just a week prior to the World Cup commencing.

However, they were always around float-

THE 2023 WORLD CUP – FINANCIALLY DELIVERED FOR THE ICC!

Within this massive anti-climax of a final and all the gloom that followed - this World Cup edition of India has broken records for in-stadium attendance and broadcast viewership, according to the ICC and its broadcast partners Disney Star.

Let's have to look at a report published by the ICC on the success of this World Cup.

6.7 Billion video views on Social Media

43 Million Website Users

60,000 views per post on Social Media

Before the above numbers are starting to amaze you, look at the official number of views as per ICC as well.

364 million total Viewers

76 Million Peak on Linear

43 Million Peak on Digital

Further on, as per the ICC Reports, a total of 1,250,307 spectators watched the 48 games at the grounds in India, surpassing the previous record of 1,016,420 spectators during the 2015 World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. The 2019 World Cup in England stands third with 752,000 spectators.

One can say this was expected, given the godly worship cricket and cricketers have within this part of the world. Another reason being that the home team India delivered their perfect ten wins in a row as well. The mood was just great and life was on auto mode for the BCCI and its stakeholders.

Streaming Services & Broadcasters have raked it in.

For a 10 second advertisement, corporates had to spend upto INR 35 lacs per insertion towards the end stages of the tournament making it a huge success for all interested parties.

Disney Star said linear television viewership in India crossed more than half a billion with 518 million tuning in for the World Cup across the six weeks of the tournament. Total consumption on TV was 422 billion minutes, making it the biggest World Cup ever, according to Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) data in India.

The World Cup final between India and Australia was watched by 300 million people, with a peak concurrency of 130 million, making it the most-watched cricket match on TV according to Disney Star.

The final also broke digital viewership records, with Disney+ Hotstar recording a high of 59 million concurrent viewers, the most for any live sports event.



ing like a Bee in this edition. The world saw them buzzing around their ears, but they were always the fringe team. Not many took them seriously to lift the title. Come the must win and the Knock Out stage, Australia stung and stung how. Convincing victory over the South Africans, who hit the panic button way too early in the semifinal and then the momentum was carried into the finals against the home team.

Looking at that Fateful Day!

It was a debacle on the 19th of November 2023. It will be etched into the soul of every Indian who followed, admired and expected to see India do the lap of honour in front of Mr. Modi in Ahmedabad. But, why did things go south for India on that day? Let's relive the decisions and it's impacts on the end result.

India "tossed" the pitch around in Australia's favour? Pitches are like chameleons. They can also come back to bite as you can't trust its nature to that extent. India experimented against the Kiwis in the Semi Finals and it did work out favourably for them.

However, the track in Ahmedabad for the final was heavily worn – much to everyone's surprise for an event of such stature. Australia won the toss and were brave enough to value the pitch and not just the occasion. They bowled first on a tacky 22 yards.

The gamble on the surface and regarding the surface failed for India – almost from the moment India lost the toss.

Home Disadvantage: You heard that right. While it's a boon, it is also a bane. When things are great, you have a lac plus people roaring away to suppress the opposition. But, when the times are tough, the home team can feel that 'weight' of expectation from the "in your face" audience waiting for that one miracle to happen.

Paralysis by Analysis: Did India just think too much about what the Australians would not be comfortable with, rather than thinking about

India dug themselves a hole by gambling either winning the toss or regardless having an air of lots of self-confidence to bat out the opposition anyways. If you think about it, one couldn't doubt that being the case if India re-played the game all over again. India has been the dominant squad for a while and at home they were like Goliaths to any other nation.

the Indian team's strengths. In hindsight, we can all sit here and comment on things, but it does seem likely that India didn't back preparing a track to suit not a traditional, but an in form Indian juggernaut prior to the final.

The Toss "Bossed" Day: Come on. While Rohit Sharma said he would have batted anyways despite losing the toss, was probably a mind game. The pitch was looking tacky from the get go, why on earth would India have wanted to not use the track under lights in better batting conditions.

India dug themselves a hole by gambling either winning the toss or regardless having an air of lots of self-confidence to bat out the opposition anyways. If you think about it, one couldn't doubt that being the case if India re-played the game all over again. India has been the dominant squad for a while and at home they were like Goliaths to any other nation.

The Dew factor: It came. Just when India did not want it to land, it was there. The first three wickets buoyed the entire nation. One could hear fire crackers going off as Steve Smith left the Australian team reeling under lots of pressure. As the pitch got better, the Australian team management sent out enough messages to Marnus Labuschagne to just stay out there and bide his time in complete test format mode with the unperturbed soul of Travis Head who was busy bashing the leather off the ball in all directions.

**HIGHEST INDIVIDUAL SCORE
MEN'S ODI RUN CHASE**

201*		GLENN MAXWELL V AFGHANISTAN 2023
193		FAKHAR ZAMAN V SOUTH AFRICA 2021
185*		SHANE WATSON V BANGLADESH 2011
183*		MS DHONI V SRI LANKA 2005
183		VIRAT KOHLI V PAKISTAN 2012

ICC MEN'S CRICKET WORLD CUP
INDIA 2023

Post World Cup Thoughts to Ponder!

Catches WIN Matches

Grown up hearing this? The saying has withstood the test of time. Cast back your memory to 1983 and relive the match winning catch of Kapil Dev to dismiss Sir Viv Richards in the World Cup final at Lords. Now, cut to the present and you'll have no choice but to compare the Travis Head's effort in Ahmedabad to dismiss Rohit Sharma in the belligerent mood that he was in. India could have run away with the game right then and there within the first 15 overs of the final.

Did Mujeeb do a Gibbs?

Now, for lost opportunities, comes to mind a great quote I heard the other day, "Opportunities are never lost, someone will always take the one you miss!". Let's align this thought process to Australia's global success in the 1999 and the 2023 World Cup. Both times, Australia got out of jail and made the cricketing world pay by lifting the trophy.

In 1999, Herschelle Gibbs dropped Steve Waugh as he decided to celebrate the wicket without gaining decisive control on the catch. Guess what happened. Steve Waugh scored 120 and Australia won the game from nowhere and then hammered Pakistan in the Final to win the coveted event.



Circa 2023, Glenn Maxwell was rather sloppily dropped by Mujeeb Ur Rahman in the 22nd over. The casual effort made Maxi achieve the unthinkable on just the one leg. He amassed an incredible 201* and qualified for the Semi Final spot. Afghanistan not only squandered their chances of a top 4 berth, but aided Australia to “believe”.

But, was it Mujeeb’s Catch that Cost India the 2023 World Cup?

It would be rather imbecile to link India’s failure to lift the trophy with a league stage match performance. It did bolster the Australian dressing room’s confidence for sure, but that has nothing to do with how their Indian counter parts were feeling. We have no statistical or empirical reason believe other than the fact that any finalist that day would have meant the same to Team India’s chances one feels.

The Road Ahead?

Well. India has conquered the art of winning almost all its Bi-lateral series. It is time that we started pushing out a structure and a plan as to how we will compete in the Global ICC events. India is now earning a reputation of cracking under pressure in crunch matches. As a cricket geek, I feel this is somehow being blown out of proportion, but there is enough statistical data to support this theory too. The answer lies within the strong Indian cricketing structure. There are enough funds, tons of talent, amazing infrastructure and the right intent. The mental make-up might be a cause of concern however. Have a look at what’s to come in the near future as per the ICC Global Event calendar. **Di**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sam is an ex-cricketer having played for Singapore U23’s and at a semi professional level in England in the 1990’s. He is a cricket-preneur working on the online & offline space in partnership with stalwarts such as Mickey Arthur.

Consumer Appetite for Luxury Brands in India is fast Catching Up

The proliferation of consumer appetite for luxury brands in India is catching the attention of the world. Indians, now more than ever, are seeking out the best in quality and name; not to mention large numbers of growth in the middle class with increasing buyer power. In keeping with this trend, the Indo-French Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IFCCI) organised a one of its own kind first ever Luxury Symposium, with a French luxury association which represents 93 luxury brands from across the world. The association, Comite Colbert, was represented by its CEO Ms. Benedicte Epinay, on her maiden trip to India.

The Symposium was in line with IFCCI's recently launched Luxury Committee which aims to introduce & enhance India's booming and ever evolving luxury sector across segments like fashion, beauty, F&B, art, Indo-French Savoir-Faire and craftsmanship. **DI**

▼ L-R - Priyadarshini Rajee Scindia, Maharani of Gwalior _ Ms. Swagata Bottero, Vice Chairperson, IFCCI Luxury Committee _ India Affairs _ Strategy Director, Cartier International.



▲ From L-R; Ms. Benedicte Epinay, CEO – Comite Colbert, H.E. Mr. Thierry Mathou, Ambassador of France to India, Ms. Payal S.Kanwar, Director General, IFCCI, Ms. Srimoyi Bhattacharya, Chairperson, IFCCI Luxury Committee & Founder, Peepul Advisory.



▲ L-R - Masoom Minawala, Global Influencer, Eric Fajole, Trade Counsellor, Head of Business France in India, Bambi Kappauf, Founder & CEO, Citizen K.



◀ Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Founder, Sabyasachi Couture.

Indian outbound travel in FY2030 WHY INTERNATIONAL IS THE NEW DOMESTIC?

Structural challenges that historically constrained India's international market are gradually being dismantled, allowing a transformative landscape to emerge.



FY2000 to FY2010

■ A period marked by a dramatic shift from a virtually closed market to a very liberal regime, complemented by increasing international activity by Indian carriers.

FY2000-FY2004

■ Until FY2004, Air India/Indian Airlines were the only home carriers permitted to operate international services. But they did not have the fleet nor commercial inclination to pursue active international expansion.

■ Meanwhile, for foreign carriers, India had arguably one of the most restrictive market access regimes in the world. Carriers such as Virgin Atlantic ended up having to pay royalties to 'sub lease' Air India's entitlements because of BASA limitations.

FY2004-FY2010

■ From FY2004 onwards, a very liberal market correction took place due to a strategic convergence of key elements for change.

■ Air India placed an order for 111 aircraft, including 50 widebodies.

■ Kingfisher placed orders for around 25 widebodies, including 10 A380s.

■ Jet Airways inducted 20 widebodies (plus options for 10 x 787s) and tens of narrowbodies in a very short period of time after being granted permission to operate international

services, 10 years after it launched. Jet had a world class product, a strong brand and a loyal customer base.

■ Bilaterals were liberalised, with a close to 300% increase in seat entitlements with key markets, along with an Open Skies agreement with the US, and a near Open Skies agreement with the UK.

■ Simultaneously, airport privatisation and modernisation changed the face of Indian aviation, with the development of international standard infrastructure at Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and 35 AAI airports.

■ Growth was achieved despite the 5/20 rule which was the most negative regulation ever introduced in India.

■ This positively changed the proposition for customers, providing more choice and more attractive fares, stimulating both inbound and outbound traffic.

The convergence of bilateral liberalisation for foreign carriers, international expansion by Indian carriers and airport privatisation, resulted in double digit international growth between FY2003 and FY2008.



FY2010-FY2020

This decade saw a convergence of events that resulted in a reversal of conditions with a virtual freeze on bilateral liberalisation for foreign carriers, while financial losses in the domestic market impacted the ability of Indian carriers to expand overseas.

- Could not capitalise on its modern fleet as the inflight product remained sub-standard, maintenance of cabins was poor, aircraft were on the ground, it was losing relevance in the market, and incurring serious red ink. Air India's membership of Star Alliance was deferred and was not fully leveraged.
- After aggressive international push to JFK, Newark, Toronto, San Francisco and Shanghai, realised that its balance sheet could not support this. This was driven by the costly acquisition of another airline which starved them of funds at a critical time.
- Growth slowed, very high product quality standards were compromised, options for 787-9s were not converted, and the carrier became more of a regional arm of Etihad.
- After a promising start with a world class service to London, the airline closed in 2012.
- Bilaterals were largely frozen with a couple of exceptions:
 - Abu Dhabi in 2013, in relation to Jet Airways deal
 - Dubai in 2014, which provided for a 20% increase
 - Oman and Saudi Arabia, but their carriers were not really carrying much traffic to Europe and North America

A missed opportunity

- During this decade, GDP almost doubled, and the absolute increase in per capita GDP was 3x that in the previous years. Meanwhile the diaspora market continued to expand with increasing migration. But the potential of the market was not realised.
- In FY2000, India's international traffic was actually slightly higher than domestic. By FY2020 it had become less than half.

During the period FY2010 to FY2020, international traffic grew at a CAGR of just 6.8%, far more moderate than earlier due to a freeze on bilaterals and the inability of Indian carriers to provide capacity.



FY2024-FY2030

Back to the future. Favourable conditions are once again aligning, as they did during FY2003 to FY2008. But this time, the airline industry is much stronger and the economy is much larger.

Indian carriers have strong balance sheets, patient capital and a strategic determination to build world class airlines

- Privatisation will result in India having a capable and well-capitalised network carrier, supported by a large fleet order for 470 aircraft, including 70 widebodies. India will finally have a full service airline with a state-of-the-art fleet suitable for all missions, world class product and

service, and an expansive network. First time since deregulation in the 90s that an Indian airline has formidable ability to fund a very aggressive business case.

- With its order of close to 1000 aircraft (which includes A321XLRs, possibly to be joined by widebodies in future), combined with an existing fleet of 339 aircraft, IndiGo will be very strong on short and medium haul routes.
- The carrier has a very strong balance sheet and has the ability to further infuse long-term capital if required, and a brand and network that will make it a formidable competitor.
- International services will debut in 2024 and will help to de-risk its domestic operations.

Indian carriers are expected to deploy an additional 325-350 aircraft on international routes over the next 5-7 years

Other factors contributing to a positive outlook for international growth

- *Economic Growth:* Strong economic growth and rising prosperity, especially among the addressable market will drive increased demand for travel.
- *Airport Capacity:* For the first time airport capacity is being developed ahead of demand, with 500 million passengers of capacity in the pipeline. Three cities will have dual airports.
- *Hub Development:* Airlines and airports are both focusing on the development of hubs, to leverage domestic connections, but also to take advantage of India's geographical location to capture South Asia traffic, and in due course intercontinental transfers – if required.
- *Bilateral Policy:* CAPA Advisory expects that the bilateral regime will start to open up from FY2025, perhaps modestly and gradually to begin with.

Double-digit growth cannot be taken for granted, but the conditions are as favourable as they have ever been in the Indian aviation sector.

Growth will inevitably face challenges...

- Supply chain issues impact aircraft and engine deliveries - could turn serious and may constrain growth.
- Availability of pilots and skilled workforce. There is likely to be a serious fight for commanders from this fiscal.
- Institutional capacity building at the DGCA and BCAS.
- Management capital to handle the complexity of rapid growth.
- Continuation of the negative fiscal regime.
- Ability of airspace capacity to keep pace with growth.
- Geo-political tensions and possible continuing uncertainty.

We believe that the positive macro environment will outweigh these issues in the long-term, although this remains to be seen

- Consumers will for the first time have a

choice between world class Indian FSCs and LCCs and leading global carriers.

■ Which is why CAPA Advisory believes that international is suddenly the new domestic.

Based on CAPA India's periodic coverage and research since 2011, we believe there is a need for setting up the right foundation for sustained profitable growth.

Challenges for travel businesses

- There are many India's in one India
- India is an extremely heterogeneous geography with diverse cultures, ethnicities, languages (121 languages spoken by 10,000 or more people), beliefs.
- One "fit for all" approach will not generate business results to the extent required
- Do not presume the approach that has worked for the business elsewhere will be successful in India
- Generic campaigns, even with powerful testimonials or star power, will not appeal to the "many India's"
- Shah Rukh Khan (Hindi) vs. Rajnikant (Tamil) vs. Diljit Dosanjh (Punjabi) vs. Mitra Gadhvi (Gujarati) vs. Manoj Tiwari (Bhojpuri)
- Generalizations result in less effective campaigns

Solutions

Requires a much deeper and qualified understanding of:

- *The Market:* which is very dynamic and rapidly evolving
- *The Consumer:* Demographics (income is reconfiguring from the shape of a pyramid to a diamond), and psychographics
- *Competition:* Competitive intensity, options
- *Distribution:* Quality, reach, incentives
- *Point of sale:* Opportunity, profitability, potential.
- *Pricing:* What is the consumers real ability to pay? Strategy (value vs. experiential vs. commoditised offerings)? Could leisure generate higher yields in future?

Enabled by

- On-ground, real-time research across the travel ecosystem – consumers, markets, airlines (incl. networks), travel agents, tour operators, regulators, airports (incl. networks)
- Digital and data tools/capabilities
- Proprietary models

India is set for game-changing international air connectivity. Indian carriers are likely to launch new routes to destinations across the world...in Australia

New route opportunities for Indian carriers exist across the globe – including for example (and these are indicative only), destination such as Boston, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Athens, Barcelona, Budapest, Geneva, Manchester, Prague, Warsaw, Zurich, Cairo,

Johannesburg, Lagos, Marrakech, Seychelles, Amman, Beirut, Medinah, Neom Bay, Red Sea, Tehran, Beijing, Guangzhou, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Langkawi, Manila, Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Brisbane and Perth.

Global regions such as South America, the Caribbean, Africa and the Pacific, that are less likely to see direct connectivity will be served by alliance partners and extensive codeshare arrangements.

Connectivity is likely to flow as follows:

- South America via European hubs such as London, Paris, Frankfurt and Madrid
- Caribbean via US hubs such as New York JFK, Newark, Dallas and Houston
- Pacific via Australian hubs such as Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane
- Africa via African hubs such as Cairo, Lagos, Nairobi and Johannesburg

High-volume routes that are currently served will see significant growth in frequencies, as well as connectivity from more Indian cities.

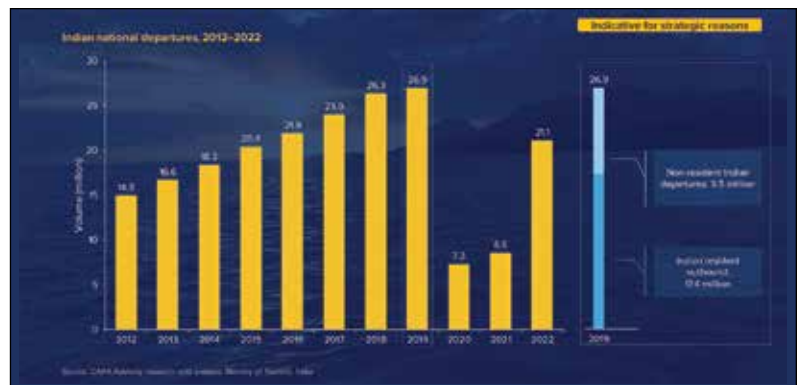
- US, UK and high-volume short haul markets will be served from multiple metros
- Australia, Canada and Continental Europe will primarily be served from Delhi, Mumbai and possibly Bangalore.

India's Tryst with Foreign Travel

India is going through a structural transformation of its key economic and consumption drivers. The addressable market for travel will grow much faster than the national average providing impetus for higher-end travel.



Departures by Indian nationals were reported to be 26.9 million in 2019. However, the number of Indian resident departures was almost 35.0% lower at around 17.4 million.



Leisure accounts for a lower percentage of India's outbound travel relative to the global average, and even this figure is believed to be over-stated as it includes an element of VFR travel, which is likely higher than what the current data indicates.



The Indian leisure outbound traffic could potentially grow to 28.1 million by 2030. International leisure expenditure would increase to USD 65-75 billion from the current 16-18 billion, of which 20% will be the expense on airfares.



Indian carriers will have greater flexibility when assessing the commercial potential of new routes, because of the ability to tap into connecting traffic on intercontinental corridors. By FY2030, this is expected to be an addressable market of up 100.0 million passengers.

- As of 2019, the potential I-I market for Indian carriers on intercontinental corridors that can be reasonably connected via India was around 80.0 million annual passengers. This is expected to reach 100.0 million by FY2030.
- This may not be a primary focus for Indian carriers, given the strong home demand. But it does provide the ability to open up supplementary traffic flows during seasonal dips on the core route.
- This can significantly enhance the viability of leisure routes, which may see more season fluctuation in demand.

In Conclusion

- India is witnessing a unique convergence of strong macro factors which can create long term structural shifts.
- Serious investment will occur in international connectivity across segments – short- medium- long- and ultra-long-haul.
- India will for the first time have a world class long-haul airline, in Air India, with the right network, fleet, product, and service.
- India will also have a world class short- and medium-haul airline, and



potentially long-haul, in IndiGo, with the right network, fleet, product, and service.

Bilaterals cannot be, and should not be, held up for long, CAPA Advisory expects gradual opening up from FY2025, allowing market forces to play a decisive role.

The Indian economy will see a transformation – GDP likely to grow from USD3.5 trillion to USD7-7.5 trillion, GDP per capita expected to grow from USD2,200 to USD5,500 by 2031. As such the overall addressable market is expected to expand and become much larger.

Airport infrastructure is, for the first time, being developed ahead of demand – additional annual capacity of 500 million passengers is planned. Furthermore, there is a focus on developing strong gateways/hubs.

The tremendous potential that exists still needs to be converted and will require a strong understanding of the consumer, including demographics and psychographics, supported by continuous investment in researching traveller behaviour and preferences, distribution, point of sale, pricing, marketing effectiveness etc. to enable data-driven decision making.

Airports will similarly have to adapt their retail, duty-free, and F&B formats to align with the rapid evolution of the customer.

By FY2030 India's international bidirectional traffic will reach 140-160 million passengers (70-80 million departing).

Outbound resident departures are expected to account for over 50 million, of which more than 28 million will be for leisure. That represents a more than 3x increase in outbound leisure travellers. But this needs to be realised, and be realised at sustainable yields. [D](#)



ABOUT CAPA INDIA

CAPA India was established more than 19 years ago with a mission to become a leader in global aviation knowledge. We have since built a worldwide portfolio of clients and experience, and an enviable reputation for independence, insight and integrity. Today aviation businesses around the world turn to us for sound advice and research.

FROM VISITOR TO A PILGRIM: THE TRANSFORMATIVE WORLD OF Ajanta and Ellora Caves

Part of the geological heritage of the Indian Peninsula, the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot hosts several rock-cut caves carved from Volcanic Basalt Rocks. Of them are the World Heritage Sites of the Ajanta - Buddhist (BC 200 to CE 650 in the Sahyadri Hills) and the Ellora - Hindu, Buddhist and Jain Caves (CE 600 to 1000 in the Charanandri Hills) in the Aurangabad District of the State of Maharashtra illustrate the universal and Indian celebration of human creativity and ingenuity. Either site requires a whole day to enable visitors to immerse in a transformative journey of hearing, seeing, and feeling paintings, sculptures, architecture, and carvings manifesting philosophical and artistic movements, design, and techniques. The essence of Ajanta and Ellora sites against natural landscapes are magnificent historical records celebrating human genius backed by strategically organised patronage.



Horseshoe shape of Ajanta Caves

by NAVINA JAJA

Background

During the monsoon, the Ajanta and Ellora sites are adorned by waterfalls and lush green vegetation contrasting with the black volcanic rocks. The caves served as rain shelters in the four months of monsoons for spiritual mendicants, traders' guilds, and ordinary people. References to patrons in various site inscriptions testify to strategic investments to create large site projects. The caves represent philosophical and functional metaphors; in several ancient Indian texts, they are spaces of spiritual retreat, and the locations become even more energised in the presence of water and forests for expressing metaphysical and artistic processes.

The sites were strategically located along ancient West-East and north-south trade

routes connecting to the Arabian Sea. Two mural Tempera paintings in the Ajanta Caves that art historians identify as people possibly traders from outside India. In one painting, there are fair-coloured men, and in the other, men wearing blue socks.

The Ajanta Story

The art in the Ajanta Caves, especially the mural paintings and even sculptures such as the image of the dying Buddha (Cave 26), inspired Buddhist art in Southeast Asia and beyond in terms of style, themes, and iconographic representation.

There are two ways to access the caves. Ideally, the more exciting route is going to the viewpoint where the visitor will get a complete view of the caves in tandem with their setting, which includes the picturesque forest area and the Waghora River. From this place, in 1819, a British Army hunting party re-discovered caves hidden for centuries. The management has made a pathway down near the ticket counter. The other option is driving to the formal parking, taking a battery bus, arriving at the ticket counter, and then climbing or taking a palanquin to the caves.

The caves are not numbered according to their chronological dates. However, the journey from Cave 1 to Cave 26 takes the

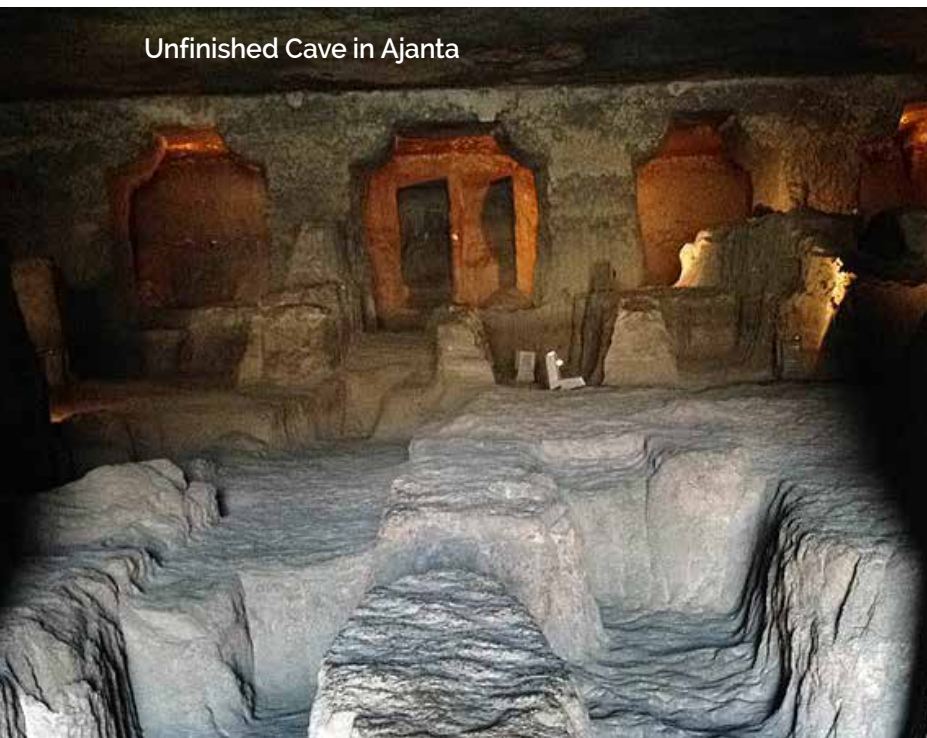




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visitor to relive the Buddhist world just as the patrons, merchants, devoted pilgrims, courtiers, and artisans engaged with the dream world of caves cut into the volcanic hills centuries ago. While the Chiatyas - prayer halls have stupas and assembly halls, the residential shelters have statues of Buddha and other Buddhist deities in antechambers. On the side of the caves are residential cells. Scholars believe that mural paintings adorned several caves; although most are unfortunately gone, the remaining ones are extraordinary. The unfinished caves, such as Cave 4, explain the internal geological formation of the layers of frozen flowing lava, and one can appreciate human virtuosity in creating the Ajanta site. The visual arts comprising tempera mural paintings, sculptures and architecture are replete with themes related to Buddha's life, stories from his previous life called the Jataka tales, Buddhist statues and even architecture such as the wooden façade of the ceiling of cave 10.

Art of Ajanta: While the Ajanta artisan used chisels and hammers relentlessly dug into the rocky hills, another set painted and



Unfinished Cave in Ajanta



Cave 19th Ajanta

Waterfall in Ajanta



sculpted the dark interiors. Scholars suggest that artisans used the direction of sunlight and reflectors to work in dark spaces. The Ajanta paintings, representing examples of one of the earliest Indian traditions, are made of locally available natural mineral colours except for the blue Lapez, which came from Afghanistan or further West /Central Asia. The flowing dark outlines, shadings with dots or lines, and illustrious techniques of three-dimensional effect combine to communicate the Buddhist world, lifestyles, fashion, and drama of human emotions. The ceilings painted with lively natural elements incorporate magical animals and fascinating human stories. There is also in Cave 1 the painted white elephant (cave 1) adopted as the symbol of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

Figurative paintings, such as the iconic contemplating Padmapani Buddha (Cave 1), represent symbols of universal processes, drawing the audience to pause and reflect. The image has Buddha as Siddhartha, the prince, and above him, there is a peacock and musicians, indicating the immense attraction for the world of sensory pleasure. On the right side, near the face, is the jumping monkey (the flighty human mind). Siddhartha's elongated, dreamy, soulful eyes looking at the white lotus (rational mind) in hand expresses the 'gale of stillness' described by the art historian Stella Kramrisch, depicting the process of an inner journey of becoming Buddha.

The sculptural art of Ajanta draws the audience to go deeper into an experiential personalised journey. On one occasion, a group of monks from

The Ajanta paintings, representing examples of one of the earliest Indian traditions, are made of locally available natural mineral colours except for the blue Lapez, which came from Afghanistan or further West/Central Asia.

the Republic of Korea evoked the past chanting in the hall of Cave 19, followed by the visit to Cave 26, where the representation of the dying Buddha was all about the bliss of Nirvana.

*Distance from Aurangabad – 100 kms;
Travel time : 2 and half hrs*

30 caves: 5 Chaityas prayer halls and ceremonial centre and 25 Viharas – residential spaces.

Recommended visit – Caves 1,2, 4/5,9,10, 16, 17, 19, 26.

Ellora: From Form to Formless

Ellora is a metaphor where man sought to find his soul by creating archaeological forms from the bold volcanic mountains. Patrons, worshippers, thousands of craftsmen, and labourers mapped from the rock spiritual journeys of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Unlike the compact display of the Ajanta caves and except for the visibility of monumental Kailash (Cave 16), the rest of the caves are spread across the mountainside, inviting visitors to venture into the silent darkness where they walk through unique designs of corridors and aligned pillar paths into the forms and into the mountain surrounded by sculptures communicating myths and where symbols replete with philosophical tenets lead to dark antechambers holding the central deity that forms the central energy consuming the visitor to retreat in the truth of their own silence.

Hinduism: Cave 16, named after the Kailash Mountain, the abode of Shiva in the Himalayas, forms the central attraction of the World Heritage site of Ellora and the largest monolith in the world created from top to

bottom, removing tonnes of rock represents the magic of human ingenuity. The shape of a chariot in the centre and the rest of the architecture encapsulates the concept of Shiva, one of the three principal Gods in Hindu myths. The grand architecture compresses the central theme of the Hindu caves in Ellora. 'Shiva', scholars explain is the idea of the male-female energy – Shiva and his consort Parvati; He represents the importance of continuity of life and the idea of the death of all living beings as an essential element for life to go on. Like most Hindu Gods, Shiva also assumes his manifest form, illustrating his grandness in the various 'lilas' or divine plays displayed through sculpted mythological tales amidst friezes from the two epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana. The visitor enters the cave and is introduced to the world of Shiva, beginning with sculptural representations of the practical world carved from within the mountain. The impressive stone sculpture of Gaj Lakshmi (the Goddess of Wealth in the company of elephants also represents material abundance.) Full-breasted, the female goddess sits atop a pool of water filled with lotus leaves with dew drops and other water beings she represents, along with a sculpture of kuber (God of wealth), the importance of resources essential for such a massive project.

The visitor moves forward in the clockwise path, first facing the three river goddesses, each symbolising the goals of human life to attain fulfilment. Ganga represents man's aspiration to refine himself, Yamuna indicates commitment as bhakti (devotion), and Saraswati is the quest for knowledge. Turning and walking up through the rock-cut corridors, the visitor performs a circumambulation and confronts drama and movement in stone on the theme of Shiva. Below, panels from the epic Mahabharat depict Krishna communicating the theory of Karma from his lecture (Gita) on the battlefield of the Mahabharat, and rows of elephants stand to celebrate an amalgamation of the temporal and philosophical ideas of power.

Stepping down from the corridor, the visitor moves towards the centre in the form of a chariot, where below is Shiva in this evolutionary form of Yogeshwar, the supreme Yogi who will be transformed into his formless state in the sanctum above. The visitor, too, is changing as a pilgrim; he climbs up into the dark passage. The ceiling has a Shiva as the cosmic dancer, the drum sound is heard internally, and finally, the pilgrim reaches the formless Shiva, where the male-female energies collapse into the axis-mundi called the Shivalinga. The visitor in the dark cave experiences the lighted echo of truth. The journey outside allows the pilgrim to climb up the hills from where he witnesses his empowerment of the top of the Kailash in the form of four lions arranged in the circle of life, and below the



Vishwakarma Buddhist Cave, Ellora



Top of Kailash



Gaj Lakshmi, Ellora



Celestial couple, Jain Cave 32

ultimate wonder of the expanse of the wonder in architecture.


The sculptures and the themes of Shiva in the Kailash temple are repeated in other Hindu caves.

Examples from the Buddhist World: Visitors walk along a road where Cave 12 'Teen Tal' - a three-storey monastery where rows of impressive statues of Boddhisatva (enlightened souls who assist others to fulfil themselves or attain Buddhahood). The visitor walks along the perfected corridor that turns, presenting the next level of rising energy in the form of Tara - the female Boddhisatva who assists in navigating spiritual evolution, and finally, the dark sanctum with a mandala on the ceiling depicting revolving energies and the unity of being in the image of the Buddha.

The passage of immersing oneself in the spiritual process through Buddhist art culminates in the chaitya -prayer hall Vishwakarma Cave 10. More evolved in architecture than Ajanta Cave 19, the cave is spectacular in its representation of the ribbed ceiling imitating wooden frames, and the shape lends itself to striking modes of echoed acoustics, making the experience a heritage.

Jain Caves: Located on the Northern side of the site, the five caves (30-34) represent the last phase of Ellora's artistic and religious impulses. The Indra Sabha assembly hall (Cave 32) displays a cohesive narrative of Tirthankars (ultimate teachers who attained freedom from the birth

cycle), myths, and symbols in sculptures, architecture, and paintings. The elaborate pillars of the Jain caves organised sequentially reflect the thematic coordinated scheme of joy, abundance and fertility with the statues of Matang Yaksha (Guardian of wealth) and paintings of flying celestial couples.

The Transformed Pilgrim: On the one hand, the organised spaces filled with the mythical and symbolic world of the Gods draw the visitors into a dynamic world inside the caves embedded in the immovable mountain. On the other hand, the visitor transforms into a pilgrim as he is drawn into the dark sanctums with the main deity filled with silence and stillness and a sense of timelessness! 

*Distance from Aurangabad – 30 kms;
Travel time: 1 hr. 34 caves – Hindu,
Buddhist, and Jain (6th - 10th CE)
Recommended visit: Hindu - Caves 16, 21,
29. Buddhist – Cave 12, 10. Jain – 30-34
(interconnected)*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Navina Jafa is a renowned curator and scholar on Cultural Heritage & Tourism, and a most accomplished

classical dancer. She is a prolific writer and regular contributor to art discussions.

DESTINATION

FIRST LOOK IMAGES OF THE NEW **AYODHYA** IN THE MAKING!





Temple town Ayodhya's transformation is being viewed by the planners as possibly the "biggest transformation in the history of the ancient city". It is just not the temple complex but the entire town that could soon become from being a sleepy hamlet into a bustling metro. With some 200 developmental projects worth ₹30,923 crore, Ayodhya would be India's first temple town made in recent times. It is virtually a greenfield project, considering the giant makeover under way.



from MEDIA REPORTS

It is one project after another that will start seeing the light of the day, as the temple complex itself is ready to open in the second half of January, 2024. Prime Minister Modi is said to do the first puja, heralding a new dawn for the ancient city.

As a starter, the airport would provide the much-needed quick connectivity. Most of this is said to be completed, with some 821 acres of land acquired. Construction of the runway, the installation of CAT-1 and RESA facilities that facilitate night landings or landings in extreme weather conditions, are done. The construction of the ATC tower has also been completed. This is good news for the city. It will facilitate visitor traffic, and announcements from domestic airlines are eagerly awaited.

Final approvals from Airport Authority of India (AAI) are awaited; several factors like the instrument landing system (ILS), will soon get a nod. Final touches are being given to the terminal building, expected to be functional in time for the inauguration. It is learnt that to start with, 60-seater aircraft will land at the airport, but by 2025, when the final phase of the airport is completed, it will be ready for Boeing airplanes. These should provide opportunities for international operations as well.

The railway station story is more advanced, as this would perhaps be a backbone to the early connectivity. Images that have been circulated, stressing the theme of the Ramayana, impressive architecture and depiction herald a new era for Indian rail infrastructure. Estimated to cost around ₹620 crore, the railway station revamp was another crucial project for Ayodhya's development.

Access to the temple complex from within the city has been taken up on a war footing. Crammed lanes will no longer hinder the routes leading to the Ram Temple. With allocated funds of around ₹797 crore, the widening of roads has been undertaken. Major revamp includes the 2-km-long Ram Janmabhoomi Path that connects Sugriv Quila to Ram Mandir. Then there is Bhakti Path, the 850-meter stretch that connects Shringar Hat to Ram Janmabhoomi. And the third one is Ram Path corridor, the 13-km-long stretch from Sahadatganj to Naya Ghat. The last one has seen hundreds of establishments cleared, to ensure speedy implementation.

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City revamp means a beautification drive covering the numerous old Ashrams, ancient ponds and temples. Various ponds that had dried up, are being restored as water bodies, streetscaping and illuminations are underway to give the city a year-round festive look.

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In a press conference, which UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held in Ayodhya, he said the ongoing projects would be completed this year itself. On the occasion of Deepotsav, CM Adityanath gave credit to the double-engine government, where both the centre and the state were determined to develop Ayodhya as the most beautiful experience. **D**







PRS: the Luxury Icon, the Beacon for High-end Experiential Tourism, a Lesson in Ensuring Uncompromised Quality

I wrote a piece for the social media, the day PRS Oberoi passed on at the age of 94. A life most well lived, his was an exceptional journey that is difficult to capture. Here is an extended reminiscing of his contribution to Oberoi Hotels, Indian travel and tourism and to all those whose lives he touched, in so many ways.

by NAVIN BERRY

A legend passed on, this historic 14th November morning. PRS rode over, like the proverbial colossus, on all that he surveyed, looked at, built, nurtured, he is one of the kinds who are recognised as legends in their lifetime!

He was held in awe and reverence, his

aura exuded energy and confidence – in his beliefs, his determination and his zero tolerance to shortcuts. He was unforgiving when people showed a lack of application; deep within him he had a heart of a child, striving to excel, never giving up in his relentless urge for excellence in all that he did. He little knew else; fastidious to every detail, including the styling of every menu printed at even the smallest of his hotels. His stylisation of the ‘small caps’ in every invite, the deliberate understated elegance that he brought to corporate identity, was only the tips of the iceberg named ‘quality’.

He became synonymous with luxury travel in India; the Oberoi brand went higher notches globally – so much so, when he started the ‘vilas’, there were few takers at the prices he found them sustainable. These were his modern-day answer to the erstwhile palaces of the maharajah, but the ‘experience’ was what had never been offered before in India. Some felt they were destined to a not too happy outcome, but then the word spread, they picked custom, and soon became iconic in themselves. His ‘vilas’ brand was the first experiential offerings which later got emulated by others; the brand logic with him remained supreme. It is a testimony to PRS, that ‘The Oberoi’ name retains its magic, in fact, has become more iconic and legendary like its global peers like Hilton and others.

In the 70s, as an old Oberoi alumni recalled, Rai Bahadur and later PRS must have been the first Indian MNCs to go international. The Taj then was more focussed on within India, there was no Infosys and the like; it was hospitality and The Oberoi that were truly among the first international giants.

Within, as a group, he preferred to focus on quality with which he knew no compromise. He was not in the numbers game, initially he did lose some of the managed properties. But then it was apparent that he preferred to work in sync with owners who shared his vision.

PRS was an icon, became one a long time ago, so much so that a meeting with him was considered a privilege. I had this privilege a couple of times. He was immaculate, as always, just that personality that he groomed each and every hotelier that went through his training and ever vigilant gaze. So, a typical Oberoi 'type' is what we would see across the Oberoi alumni, as also in the gait of both Vikram, his son, and Arjun, his nephew. Just as in many of the old Oberoi hands – the likes of late Anil Madhok, Rajiv Kaul, Sanjiv Malhotra, to name a few. All, I have seen, have the same perfect gait, as if PRS just as much taught them how to walk.

PRS could not think 'budget' or even 'mid-market'. That in itself would have been a contradiction in terms for him, it was beyond him. At a press conference to announce the opening of The Trident Gurgaon, some time back, he was keen to show me around the hotel; I refused his offer, saying he was embarrassing me. He insisted a senior colleague will show me around. Half an hour later, I got the impression he was kind of waiting for my return. What did I have to say, he seemed too keen to be asking? "No, Mr Oberoi" I started. His face kind of fell, he looked sad. He knew what was coming. "You have done it again," I said. He was even more reflective. We did not say any more beyond that. We both knew what we were talking. He had built another luxury resort, which is what he knew best. Nothing 'Trident' about it, if it was meant to be his 4-star offering. Till this day, The Trident Gurgaon is a much-preferred destination resort, with an ambience unrivalled and most unique as an experience. I might prefer it to its sister property, The Oberoi Gurgaon, for its non-hotel oasis experience in the heart of the city. But then, this was PRS, never imagining something 'less than the best'.

His humility, concern could be awe-inspiring. On another occasion, I was with him at the Oberoi farm, his office and also his residence. Would I have another coffee, he asked? I replied, only if he had the time, I would love it. To which he said, he had all the time, when "I have people over to the farm, I keep enough time to spend with them, considering



▲ P.R.S. Oberoi receiving the Padma Vibhushan from Smt. Pratibha Patil - Former President of India.



◀ P.R.S Oberoi receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award from the former Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh at The Economic Times Awards for Corporate Excellence.

As industry initiatives, he was instrumental in the launching of the Hotel Association of India (HAI), preferring a smaller dedicated grouping of starred hotels to deliberate more focussed on Indian hospitality and tourism.



◀ P.R.S. Oberoi, Executive Chairman, honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award - Forbes India Leadership Award.



The Trident Gurgaon is a much-preferred destination resort, with an ambience unrivalled and most unique as an experience.



He was also instrumental in bringing WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council), a worldwide assembly of the biggest players in travel and tourism globally, and starting their India chapter.

the distance they have travelled all the way from the city"! So, very thoughtful. He was the most charming of hosts, exceptionally candid in everything he spoke or did.

Not that he was only all charm. He could be unrelenting in his pursuit of what he thought needed to be done. It was only 'his' way. A dressing down from him could leave a lasting impression for an hour, a day, a career, but that was also truly him. This is also part of his folklore, his persona, his legend, none the less for it. It brought that side of him, his aura, his

conviction of what he considered 'the' way. Ironically, this aspect rounded his character, in the way great playwrights would have created their protagonists on stage.

His legacy embraces all. More importantly, today, the Oberoi name rubs shoulders with the best globally, a proud 'Made in India' legacy in hospitality known around the world! His passing on is also a proud moment for India and all Indians at home and abroad to recognise and cherish what PRS has left as his contribution to Indian and global hospitality! Consider that the Oberoi alumni straddle across the world, each a proud Oberoi product, so much so, the XO Club (ex-Oberoi) has become an institution in itself! It should grow now, more than ever, in ensuring the PRS legacy lives on around the globe.

He would often lament that India's potential for inbound tourists remained untapped. He often said his understanding of leisure tourism, as a component of total arrivals, was not adequate or commensurate to our potential. As industry initiatives, he was instrumental in the launching of the Hotel Association of India (HAI), preferring a smaller dedicated grouping of starred hotels to deliberate more focussed on Indian hospitality and tourism. He was also instrumental in bringing WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council), a worldwide assembly of the biggest players in travel and tourism globally, and starting their India chapter. But soon, his interest would wear off, considering that our industry bodies are prone to varying shades of opinion and often not driving adequate direction, his interest falling off, so to say.

We can best honour him by emulating his unflinching dedication to delivering excellence in hospitality! Efficiency combined with quality in creating world class products – this indeed is his message that Indian tourism needs to imbibe and grow with, in the years ahead! Long live PRS in the quality and dedication of the Indian tourism experience! **Di**

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CARING FOR THE ELDERLY

Awakening our Sensitivity towards Senior Citizens is the Need of the Hour.

by NAVIN BERRY

India is at a peculiar stage in its demographic transition. The country is characterised by a bulge in its youth population, which is a window of opportunity to accelerate growth. However, a parallel phenomenon that requires equal attention is the rising senior citizen population,” Saurabh Garg, secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, has written in a newspaper article.

Not too soon, not too late, for a subject that is increasingly occupying public space and attention. Senior living is becoming a growing concern, what with many a youngster going overseas, or settling in another city, with the size of the core family coming down, nuclear families as they existed in the past, is indeed becoming a thing of the past.

According to Census 2011, the population of senior citizens was about 10.38 crores, or 8.6% of the total population. Saurabh Garg has pointed out that there is a Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 that gives effect to the provisions for their overall physical and mental well-being. So, while we may have the youngest population globally, they too will age, and what better to make them understand this need, when they are young and growing.

“The Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY) is an umbrella scheme that has the vision to create a society where senior citizens live a healthy, happy, empowered, dignified and self-reliant life along with strong social and inter-generational bonding”, he says.

In order to make cities friendly for senior citizens and the disabled, the government is working in mission mode to achieve universal accessibility. This is linked to the 'Accessible India Campaign' (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan). Accessibility for senior citizens is not only a matter of convenience but a fundamental aspect of promoting their empowerment and dignity and to enable them to continue making valuable contributions to society, Garg writes.

“Only 12% of the senior citizens in India



PHOTO: [HTTPS://WWW.ANTARASENIORCARE.COM](https://www.antaraseNIORCARE.COM)

are aware of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007. To bridge the information gap, a national helpline (14567) has been set up to provide information about welfare schemes, to address grievances and other related matters. A participative ratings framework and standards to support the development of the private sector will help in providing the necessary market stewardship while ensuring the highest quality of service delivery in senior citizen homes,” he says.

To promote innovation in products and processes for the benefit of the elders, Senior Care Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE) has been launched to provide one-time equity support to startups that develop business ideas based on the needs of senior citizens. Entrepreneurs are encouraged to think about the problems of senior citizens and come up with innovative out-of-the-box solutions.

More than 50% of older citizens are determined to be active.

Retirement age of 60 or around is being questioned and more and more people are getting out to stay at work longer in life. The reverse is equally true, that senior citizens need greater sense of protection.

Businesses searching for experienced and stable staff can leverage the experience, time, and efforts of these senior citizens. Opportunities for participation in labour activities, access to social protection, and security in old age, as well as a positive workplace environment, are keys to achieving a productive ageing society, writes Garg.

In fact, society is increasingly getting sensitised towards caring for the elderly. It is not uncommon any more to see many a citizen extend a helping hand to an older person to cross a road, or find his way across a market. **D**



“In order to make cities friendly for senior citizens and the disabled, the government is working in mission mode to achieve universal accessibility. This is linked to the 'Accessible India Campaign' (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan).”

Saurabh Garg
Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment

A Life of Dignity for All



Towards empowerment of people with Intellectual Disability

▼ Using discarded flowers for making Holi colours



Muskaan, founded by Shanti Auluck, is an inspiring story of a mother driven by the simple understanding that all lives are equal and all have the right to live a full life with dignity. A zealous champion against social injustices, especially for those with Intellectual Disability (ID) started Muskaan 41 years ago. The Centre, headquartered in Vasant Kunj, New Delhi does impressive and essential work in training adults with learning disabilities to build comprehensive life-skills and vocation skills and thereby earn a living and life with self-respect. She exudes warmth and passion as she speaks of the students at the Centre who are all equally special and close to her heart.

In conversation with
PRIYAANKA BERRY IDNANI

Just to begin and introduce everyone to what got you motivated to start the Welfare association for Down Syndrome 1982, which is today Muskaan?
It has been a personal journey. I had my son,

Puneet in 1976 and realized within a few days that he had Down Syndrome. Over the next couple of years, I experienced the challenges and demands that came with it.

Soon, it became very clear that I have to move my perspective to a more solution-oriented approach. I started to learn from my son and observe him and those around. It was extremely unsettling to see the insensitivity from certain sections in our society. My primary thought and motivation became that my son must get the respect and life he deserves.

“We owe it to the children with intellectual disability and their families, and we must work to create opportunities so that they can live a decent and respectful life”. The Welfare association for Down Syndrome began with parents wanting the same for their children and professionals wanting to make a difference.

My background in Psychology also helped me here. I was able to adapt and modify learning techniques and apply ways to impart cognitive training. We had no model or processes available to follow. We started with small experiments and allowed the children to guide us along the way. Today, the processes have been documented in detail and that is critical work done.

I saw a very impressive book celebrating 40 years of Muskaan and clearly it has been a journey of learning and accomplishments. What would you say have been your landmark achievements?

What does stand out is in 1989 we started our vocational training centre, in the name of Muskaan. The goal here has been to impart simple vocational skills and prepare them for a life of work and employment, thus giving them a feeling of pride and purpose and community.

The success we saw inspired us to grow and take on more students. We started off in a garage. I did not like the cramped space where our students, teachers and volunteers worked. It was important to have a

proper facility and infrastructure for not only the students but also the faculty. These are very special people who opt to work here.

We approached Delhi Development Authority for the allotment of land in 1994. Today, Muskaan operates from an acre of land in Vasant Kunj and my husband, Santosh Auluck, who is an architect, and his friends helped plan and build this. The community of friends and supporters of Muskaan helped make it a reality.

We decided on working with students of age 16+ as little exists for them. The training centre also looks at life-skill training and personal growth-oriented programme. This includes training activities for cognitive enhancement, social-emotional understanding, independence in daily life, and knowledge of physical and social environment. We also have a Supported Work Centre that gives employment to our students where they make a wide-range of products, then sold through various channels. We also have physical therapy, computer skills class and a sports and recreational facility. We also have an Assisted Living Facility, where people with ID live and work at the Muskaan centre in Vasant Kunj.

You believe there are diverse ways of being in this world and each one is valid and authentic. Can you elaborate on how we as a society can work towards social inclusion?

The most important is to have the presence of those with intellectual disability around you and society. If we interact more and see those with ID around us, automatically our awareness and knowledge of their abilities will increase and lead to greater social inclusion and respect. Parents must also work to overcome their own sense of stigma of having a child with ID.

“Life is a gift, and everyone enjoys it in one’s own unique way. There are diverse ways of being in this world and each is valid and authentic. What ultimately matters is that everyone should be treated with love and respect and get opportunity for a full life as much as possible. That is social inclusion.”

How is Muskaan working at advocacy with the Government and other stakeholders to create adequate, appropriate and quality services and facilities for people?

We realized that misconceptions and prejudices inbuilt in society was a huge limiting factor. Many believe that ‘impoverishment’ of their lives arose from their disability whereas the truth is that it was the lack of needed facilities. There is an attitude of charity and lack of knowledge on the way forward. Muskaan is an active advocate for social awakening for the rights of people with disabilities.

Time has shown that many adults with Intellectual Disability, with training and support, can find employment in the real world. Are you seeing a greater awareness and open mindedness today?

Yes absolutely. Hospitality is a sector we are seeing showing good uptake and open-mindedness. Lemon Tree Hotels, RedFox, The Lodhi, Radisson, Four Points Sheraton and other partners are offering avenues for employment for our students. The more you see and interact with people with ID in your daily life, the more you realize that they too are capable for mainstream employment and this leads to greater awareness, sensitivity and respect. They are hard-working, honest, sincere and passionate about their work and often receive high praise from employers and other team members.

What are your next goals for Muskaan?

First, more advocacy with the government and thereby create and help on policy assessment and formulation. There is an immense need for more facilities and services being made available to those with intel-




▲ National Award to Muskaan for its outstanding performance in the field of Welfare of Persons with Disabilities by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, in 2006.

tual and developmental disabilities.

Second, we want to work on group houses. Not everyone has the option to live with their parents/family. Here 4-6 senior adults with ID would live together as an extended family assisted by family members and professionals and assistants. Muskaan would take the role of monitoring, supervisory and training.

Lastly, we want to start work on a teachers’ training centre. The team here has vast experience and knowledge and can impart much value in working with and understanding those with ID.

Reach Muskaan: Supporting their Initiative and How?

Support the cause by donating, volunteering or simply shop their products. These products are made with care by the men and women employed at the Supported Work Centre of Muskaan. Each has necessary certification and go through quality checks. These include daily use spices ‘masalas’, flour, candles, gift bags, baked good, pickles and more. 

To know more visit www.Muskaan-paepid.org.

ABOUT MUSKAAN

Muskaan creates and provides opportunities for capacity development of people with Intellectual Disability and their families, advocates for their rights and legal capacity, collaborating, facilitating and promoting the creation of an enabling environment and an inclusive society.

From Manipur with Love

Its Association with Indian Army and 25 Years of Cuban Habanos in India



by CHETAN SETH, *Chairman, Cingari India*

Polo, celebrating the bond between Man and Animal

One doesn't need to be a sports lover to enjoy the sport of Polo. It is easily one of the most visually appealing games one would have the fortune of witnessing. The magnificent horses with their coats brushed until they are shining, their tails tied in a neat braid and wrapped in the team colors, the comradery and trust between the horse and the rider, the unspoken bond that has you scratching your heads as to how one could trust such a strong and able beast to be controlled by mere thigh muscles and just a reign in their hands. The truth is that both the horses and the humans are actually quite similar to each other, for most part both show and understand emotions and feel empathy, develop trust, show stress, learn by observation and require social relationships to be healthy. It takes years to form a bond with one's horse, but once it's done it is a bond made for life.

Someone said that playing polo is like playing golf during an earthquake and they aren't wrong. To be a polo player you need your entire body utilized. Abdominal, lower back, hip, glutes and legs for riding and for playing it is the upper back, chest, shoulders, arms not to mention the cognitive and emotional presence you need to maneuver your horse in a game that can get rather chaotic.

The rules of polo seem fairly simple - two teams of four players each ride on horseback and use long-handled mallets to hit a wooden ball down a grass pitch. The aim is to score a goal by hitting the ball between two posts, just like other sports played with a ball. In actuality, there are strict rules based on the safety, wellbeing and welfare of horses and players, in that order. Anything that can endanger the horse, is treated as a foul. The imaginary line in which the ball is travelling or will continue to travel is sacrosanct and cannot be crossed.

Polo comes from Manipur, moved to royalty across the world

The fact that Manipur is the birth place of polo is already supported by the Guinness World Records, by a declaration in the year 1991, as: "Polo can be traced to origins in Manipur state c. 3100 BC, when it was played as Sagol Kangjei. Possibly, this is where it got its title as "Sport of Kings", as it was the royals from the state of Manipur that generally played a sport that looked an awful lot like Modern Polo. It was from there that the ethnic tribes and tea planters picked up the sport and gave it more popularity allowing Lt. Joseph Ford Sherer of the British Army's Sylhet Light infantry to formalize the modern Polo in the 18th century. The sport quickly picked up and was often linked with the UK Royal Family and the nobility across the world.

Polo, Habanos and its Association with Cingari

My passion and love for the sport of Polo, originally came as a spectator, smoking my Habanos and watching the game, much as



Habanos

Unique since 1492



“My passion and love for the sport of Polo, originally came as a spectator, smoking my Habanos and watching the game, much as the Spanish do while watching a bullfight.”

the Spanish do while watching a bullfight. I convinced Cingari, managed by my daughter Ameeta that exclusively represents and distributes Cuban Cigars in India, to look at sponsoring the sport on a long-term basis, especially since it is the only sport which has complete gender parity for the horse and the players.

They started with the Maharaja Hari Singh Cup (of the Kashmir Royal Family) and in 2004, when the Cavalry Gold Cup was instituted, we decided to become their principal sponsor in recognition of the contribution of the 61st Cavalry and the Indian Army to the game of Polo, without which it would not have existed or flourished in India.

Celebrating 25 years of Habanos in India

This year, we celebrated 25 years of Habanos in India and the finals received a record participation, showing the growing popularity of the game from a spectators' perspective. We



▼ Best Dressed Man and Woman: Ms. Siggi Spiegelburg, a famous designer from Germany and her husband Wolfgang Holker



H.E. Mr. Alejandro Simancas Marin, the Ambassador of Cuba in India

tried to make the whole event different this year with the Chucker's being interspaced with prizes for the best dressed man and woman, lucky draws for hampers and a fashion experience by JANAVI, now a globally recognized Indian brand for cashmere products who had a demonstration of the many different ways a scarf can be draped around a woman's neck/shoulders. The models being well-known as Delhi's women of substance. Before the final match began, world renowned singer Yvonne Ramirez from Cuba sang "Evita," a song synonymous with Argentina which incidentally happens to be the polo capital of the world. The Army band was also in attendance followed by an exemplary riding display by the most elegant riders of the 61st Cavalry.

The Finals between The Vimal Arion Achievers and Jindal Panthers commenced after the ceremonial throw in by Chief Guest Jose Maria Lopez, The Vice President of Habanos SA, (who specially came to India for this event) and Quarter Master General to the Indian Army, Lt. General



Rajinder Dewan. The match was intense and had everyone on the edge of their seats. The Vimal Achievers started with an impressive lead and in spite of the Jindal Panthers' remarkable defence strategy, were able to maintain that lead with some impressive play by their star player Daniel Otomendi, an 8-handicap player from Argentina.

Post the match, the VIP attendees were invited to High tea where the celebration continued with our hospitality partner CAARA, presenting a delicious chemical – free food and memorable culinary experiences, VIP Cigar lounges where we had on display the newly launched "Pratham India" Edition of the Quai D'Orsay Cigar, courtesy our lifestyle partner, Habanos, and exclusive entertainment featuring renowned Jazz singer Rachel Varghese, ensuring a truly unforgettable experience for all. For the first time, we also showcased an incredible collection of "Cigar Art" made and curated by Mixed Media Artist, S. Ayesha who expressed her works as: "Cigars are an art form in themselves with each one hand rolled to perfection after a long process of curing the tobacco leaf. This collection of cigar art is similar in that each piece is one of a kind and cannot be replicated even by me! The botanical illustration of the tobacco leaf, so intricate and beautiful in its different stages of curing have appeared in my pieces. Years of collections of original cigar bands a testament of how many cigars have been lit, savored and enjoyed as appear as borders of some of this collection."

A most memorable celebration of the sport, Habanos in India and Cingari's association with both polo and the Indian world of cigars. □

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chetan Seth is a leading socialite in the capital; as chairman of Chemron Group, he has been the face of the best Cuban cigars in the country. He has a long association as a sponsor for polo in India. His company 'Cingari' is known for its lifestyle promotions.

THE ICON GETS MORE ICONIC!

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) has completed the renovation of the Taj Mahal hotel in Delhi. This iconic Mansingh Road property was recently in the eye of the storm witnessing a heady auction conducted by NDMC.

by NAVIN BERRY

IHCL retained the right to run the hotel in Lutyens' Delhi for another 33 years after a 2018 NDMC public auction for the property. It has since spent close to ₹250 crore in refurbishing the hotel that completes 45 years. Once won again, the Taj Group got down to some serious business, preferring not to shut it down, neither knocking it down, but refurbishing it one step at a time. Re-imagining it, like the group has been doing its entire portfolio! Not surprising the company turned out a profit exceeding 1000 crores last financial, a figure that had never been imagined before in the history of Indian hospitality.

Today, the Taj Mansingh has been fully renovated, it has bounced back to the same levels of revenues and profits that were clocked earlier. And, this is despite the lease rentals (under deal the NDMC) going higher.

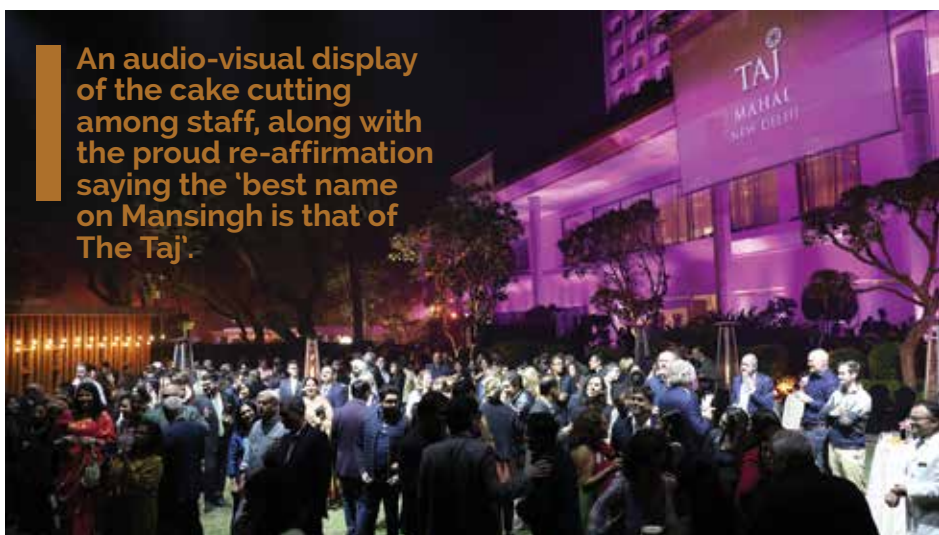
The hotel wears an entirely new look. The lobby itself, your first point of contact, has a fresh appearance, with small subtle touches – a new seating with jaali work cordoning; repositioning of facilities, new water bodies. The entire swimming pool and the outdoor lawns have been revitalised, with richer features. Imagine, at the 45th birthday celebrations, the hotel used a drop-down curtain to put up an audio-visual display of the cake cutting among staff, along with the proud re-affirmation saying the 'best name on Mansingh is that of The Taj'.

So, the birthday bash was an experience to treasure. I am not good with head counts, but perhaps in excess of 800 or so! Largely corporates, the who's who, senior hotel fraternity (a great gesture in fellow industry bonding), senior travel trade and many of the chain's partners and associates, were there to celebrate. The Shillong Choir performed much to the appreciation of this large crowd. The food court was un-imaginable – every conceivable cuisine in plenty, so well displayed, with plenty of bars around for easy convenience!

And what were they celebrating? Not just the best name on Mansingh, but equally the new features that have been added to the property. Renovations was about drawing from the past, building on it, and looking into the future



◀ Unveiling of the plaque by Puneet Chhatwal, MD & CEO, IHCL; Rohit Khosla, Executive VP – Operations, North and West India and Satyajeet Krishnan, Area Director - Operations and GM, Taj Mahal, New Delhi.



An audio-visual display of the cake cutting among staff, along with the proud re-affirmation saying the 'best name on Mansingh is that of The Taj'.

and creating something that was in keeping with the changing needs of the customers. Two floors of luxury apartments have also been created for longer stays, the first such facility in down town Delhi, especially in Lutyens' Delhi. Lesser number of rooms, with studio apartments has meant bringing down the number of keys from 292 to 213, but this is also a recognition that such changes will bring increased revenues.

'Machan', the 24-hour coffee shop was modernised on its theme sometime earlier; the 'House of Ming' was more recently given an entirely contemporary experience, making it ready for a global launch – the brand was showcased recently in the chain's London property, taking selective cues from the Delhi outlet.

'Reimagined' is elsewhere too. The roof-top Chambers Club with support from luxury fashion and lifestyle company Stefano Ricci, has now taken two floors and a great ambience with separate dining from entertainment facilities. The spa and wellness areas are expected to be open very soon. Revamped banqueting spaces provide for more open experiences and possibly more head count. All in all, the 'crown jewel' in the company's portfolio in North India is headed for yet another long innings in its new avatar. **D**

ALL-ELECTRIC AIR TAXI SERVICE ACROSS INDIA IN 2026



A strategic initiative to provide an innovative and revolutionary urban alternative solution for the country. This could be a game changer for many of our problems in urban commuting. Imagine having to rush to a hospital in a medical emergency? Not just urban but equally in the hills. And, in so many of our mushrooming hill resorts and urban landscapes?

hi trip from Connaught Place to Gurugram, typically taking 60 to 90 minutes by car, in approximately 7 minutes.

In addition to urban air taxi services, the parties plan to pursue a variety of other use cases for the electric aircraft in India, including cargo, logistics, medical and emergency services, as well as private company and charter services.

Rahul Bhatia, Group Managing Director of InterGlobe, said: “Over the last two decades, InterGlobe has been involved in providing safe, efficient, and affordable transportation to hundreds of millions of Indians across the country. We are excited at this new opportunity of bringing an effective, futuristic and sustainable transport solution by introducing Archer’s electric aircraft to India.”

Urban congestion is not sustainable with the World Bank projecting that the urban population will more than double by 2050 with short road commutes taking up to 2 hours in many of the world’s largest cities.

Archer’s innovative, state-of-the-art electric air taxis are designed to provide a safe and sustainable, low-noise urban mobility solution for India, as it races towards becoming a \$5 trillion economy.

Archer is designing and developing electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft for use in urban air mobility networks. Archer’s mission is to unlock the skies, freeing everyone to reimagine how they move and spend time. Archer’s team is based in Santa Clara, CA. **DI**

InterGlobe Enterprises, the parent company of Indigo Airlines and Archer Aviation Inc. (NYSE: ACHR), a leader in electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft, have announced a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the goal of partnering to launch and operate an all-electric air taxi service in India, subject to appropriate regulatory approvals and clearances.

Rahul Bhatia, Group Managing Director of InterGlobe, and Nikhil Goel, Chief Commercial Officer of Archer, signed an MOU to form a proposed partnership through which the parties aim to provide a revolutionary transportation solution for the country, improving urban mobility with safe, sustainable, and low-noise electric air taxi service that is cost-competitive with ground transportation.

The parties intend to work with select in-country business partners to operate Archer’s aircraft, finance and build vertiport infrastructure,

and train pilots and other personnel needed for these operations. The partnership also plans to finance the purchase of up to 200 of Archer’s Midnight aircraft for the India operations. Archer’s Midnight aircraft is a piloted, four-passenger electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft designed to perform rapid back-to-back flights with minimal charge time between flights. The goal is for a passenger on an InterGlobe-Archer flight to be able to fly the 27-km Del-

Archer’s innovative, state-of-the-art electric air taxis are designed to provide a safe and sustainable, low-noise urban mobility solution for India, as it races towards becoming a \$5 trillion economy.

The goal is for a passenger on an InterGlobe-Archer flight to be able to fly the 27-km Delhi trip from Connaught Place to Gurugram, typically taking 60 to 90 minutes by car, in approximately 7 minutes.

ONE GOOD REASON TO HEAD TO SOUTH GOA!

An exclusive DI REPORT

You don't need to wait for a reason to head to the South when next in Goa. For the best in class food and experience, head over to Juju, for a dining experience that promises a lively evening of music and memories. Open for lunch as well, soak in the Goan sun in the pleasant outdoors.

The restaurant serves reimagined modern Indian cuisine, combining traditional favourites with innovative preparations and finest flavours.

The experience has been conceptualized and nurtured by a strong team of passionate individuals. The menu has been crafted by well-known local Goan Chef, Avinash Martins. Highly recommended dishes include Zaffrani Jhinga Tempura, Chicken Tenders Travencore, Duck Khurchan Bhondas and Peanut Butter Eggplant Salan.

Award-winning Russian mixologist, Evgenya Prazdnik, takes charge of the bar using Indian ingredients infused with modern techniques.

Samiir Wheaton brings his elevated sense in interiors and vibrant architectural designs.

Juju offers a lively line-up of events that add that extra zing and enthusiasm featuring a live band 4 times a week. **DI**

GETTING THERE

The restaurant is open 7 days a week from 12:30 – 15:30 & 19:00 – 23:30.

House number 29/1, Gandaulim, Colva, Salcete, Goa. You can also connect with them on 8956691430



THE BEATLES MANIA IS BACK?

With 'Now and Then', how Much will it
Bring the Forgotten Magic?

More people across the world have bonded over music, and when it came to the last but forgotten song of The Beatles there has been a nostalgic outpouring, not surprisingly though!





This final song, as it were, is called 'Now And Then'; it could be said it has been in the making for just 45 years – we gather, the first notes were written by John Lennon in 1978 and the song finally completed last year. All the four Beatles persona are featured on the track; it must be the last, while we all thought we were done with the last already, marking the 'last and very last' and finally close the chapter in perhaps what must be the most glorious music group in the global music industry.

The original demo has circulated as a bootleg for years. An apologetic love song, it's fairly typical of John Lennon's solo output of the 1970s - Lennon recorded a demo with vocals and piano at his home in New York. After his death, his widow Yoko Ono gave the recording to the remaining Beatles on a cassette. It was finished in the studio last year by Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr. George Harrison has made his appearance via rhythm guitar parts he had recorded in 1995.

The band apparently had also then attempted to record 'Now And Then', but the session was abandoned, as it did not turn out well.

The song had a chorus but is almost totally lacking in verses. In the end the quality of the recording was considered too poor to salvage. Harrison reportedly called it "rubbish", but McCartney never let go of the idea.

During the making of The Beatles' Get Back documentary, director Peter Jackson's film company developed a piece of software that allowed them to "de-mix" muddled recordings of overlapping sounds. Artificial intelligence was used like in learning the sound of John Lennon's guitar. The software was able to "lift" Lennon's voice from an original cassette recording, get the tones right as only AI could do at this point in time. So much so, Paul McCartney, who should know, has called Lennon's voice as coming "crystal clear"!

The entire process is incredible, to say the least. Reinventing parts to make a whole again, like it was yesteryears brought back to life, again, crossing boundaries of time, altogether.

The entire process is incredible, to say the least. Reinventing parts to make a whole again, like it was yesteryears brought back to life, again, crossing boundaries of time, altogether.

Does it match the original? Yes, and no. Largely because we know the time lag, and we remain critical to some extent. But yes, it is history in the making again, reviving a lost legacy. Will this be used, in the future, to re-inventing new songs? Only time

will tell. For the present, it is adequate to revive the hysteria around the 'Beatles' brand, rekindle memories of a time gone by, and bring some more money into their business, back again. Perhaps, rekindle to ignite sales among the younger generations, the next few weeks will tell. But then this is not the era of LPs, cassettes, and such like. It is the era of Youtube and other social media. Times have changed, even for The Beatles! **DI**

by NAVIN BERRY with media inputs

“Modi the Challenge of 2024”

by S K MISRA

A very fascinating narrative of contemporary Indian politics by a well-known journalist, Minhaz Merchant who has no personal axe to grind. He gives credit where credit is due, particularly to Modi around whom the book revolves. His credit to Modi may seem excessive but in fairness to him it is well deserved. He has highlighted his achievements particularly in Foreign Affairs, economy, welfare measures, climate change, smart cities etc.

His critics may have other views, but on the other hand, Minhaz is very critical of some of Modi's policies and severely lambasts his polarisation politics and public display of religion. He also points out areas which have been neglected by Modi, such as Police reforms, governance at the municipal level, particularly in the smart cities; health care, and taxation issues; on his refusal to interact with the press; his concentration of power.

On the MOGHUL Rulers, who the BJP supporters refuse to acknowledge as Indian

“The powerful Moghul Empire was so integrated into India's secular ethos that in the 17th century it cut its umbilical cord with the Ottoman Caliphate to which the other Islamic Sultanate paid tribute.”

On secularism

“After partition, Jawaharlal Nehru recognised that the knife the British had driven through Indian secularism wounding it deeply, could only be healed by leaning the other way; giving Muslims who had chosen to stay on in India the confidence that they would be treated fairly. His intent was noble. In practice it began India's journey down the slippery slope of faux secularism. When you lean towards one faith, however, pure your intent, you will lean away from another. For the next 50 years India practised secularism in name”.

On dynastic politics, Nehru again comes under fire

Jawaharlal Nehru, an unflinching democrat in public, appeared to be a closet dynast in private. He appointed his 42 year-old daughter Indira, President of the Congress in 1959. While Nehru took the first step to introduce dynasty in India, Indira Gandhi cast it in stone”.

On the plight of the Muslims

“Most Indian Muslims continue to live in abject poverty. They remain under represented in the IAS, in business, in startups, law, medicine, accountancy, management and engineering. Politicians give them sermons, not jobs - the token Muslim is lionised from business to literature - but the average Muslim languishes in his 76-year-old ghetto. It is from



“He (Minhaz Merchant) gives credit where credit is due, particularly to Modi around whom the book revolves. His credit to Modi may seem excessive but in fairness to him it is well deserved.”

such ghettos that raw recruits to terrorist groups are most easily lured.


On 2024 elections his view is that Modi is most likely to get a third term though in the run up to the elections he seems vulnerable.

This however, is not likely because of his pro-poor policies, lack of cohesion in the opposition and absence of a well-defined alternate credible programme. His one big asset is Rahul Gandhi.

On Partition, he disagrees with the general view that partition should have been avoided.

Partition brought unimaginable suffering to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others. But what was the alternative? An undivided India with a 35% Muslim population at birth including those in West Pakistan and East Pakistan? Unending civil strife could have resulted. That could have been a mortal wound festering in a new nation”.

It may be mentioned that Sardar Patel came to the same conclusion after seeing how Liaquat Ali Khan of the Muslim League in the interim Government headed by Nehru was able to block all progressive measures proposed by the Congress.

One may not agree with his analysis on some issues, but his views cannot be brushed aside, I certainly enjoyed the book. 



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SK Misra is former IAS senior officer, former principal secretary to PM Chandrashekhar, and presently chairman,

ITRHD (Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development).

NO DREAM IS TOO BIG!

Effectively, it says to Dream is Good, and then only can we Deliver! Indeed, this book spells just one such dream over a government career across sectors.

by DI BUREAU

Not often does any officer, either in government or in the private sector, pen down what all he did during his working tenure. It is like calling oneself out, to scrutiny, to analysis; it is like seeking to share your own report card! G G Saxena, IAS retired, has just done that. Listed through his long innings what all did in every one of his postings. A testimony perhaps as to how and why the bureaucracy survives! There are more good officers than the not-so-good ones.

GG has served in Prasar Bharti, in the sales tax department, in the Andamans and in Delhi Tourism, among others. As a Delhi cadre officer, he has seen much and done much, as well. His memoirs were released recently in the capital, at a special evening organised by the Delhi Administration Officers' Academic Forum, Social Buzz and Prabhat Prakashan.

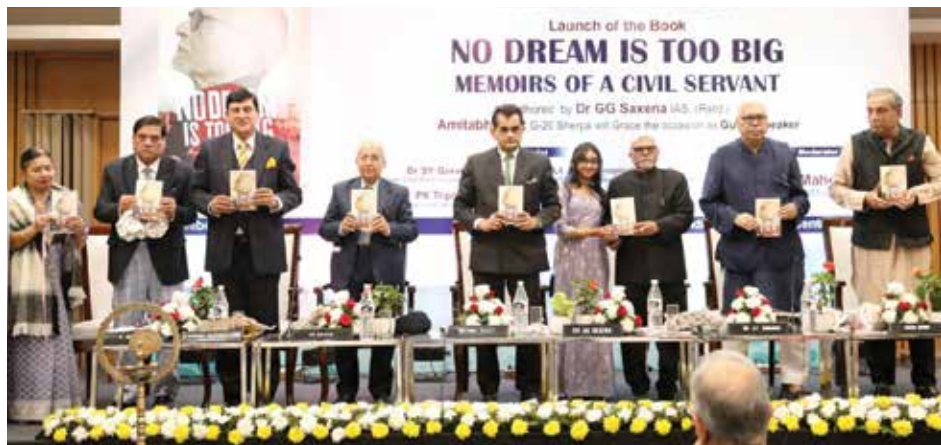
'No Dream is Too Big: Memoirs of a Civil Servant' was formally launched at the India International Centre (IIC) by Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa who had the opportunity to interact with GG when the former was JS in the Ministry of Tourism and GG was serving in the Andamans.

The launch event included Dr SY Quraishi, former CEC; Lt. General Bhopinder Singh, former LG in the Andamans; PK Tripathi, former chief secretary, Delhi Government; and Navin Berry, chief editor, DI Conversations. K Mahesh was moderator for the panel discussion that formed the highlight of the event.

"Tourism is the biggest job creator where every direct job creates five indirect jobs due to the multiplier effect. This book will inspire budding bureaucrats and aspiring civil servants to understand the qualities required by a civil servant. Dr Saxena has always created user-friendly manuals in whichever department he worked and this book may be a good reference book for UPSC civil service exams," said Amitabh Kant in his introduction to the book.

"Dr. Saxena is one of the finest officers that the Delhi Administration has produced. He is the man who lives, eats, and breathes tourism," he added while reviewing the book.

Speaking on how tourism is helping the country despite having a considerably low



proportion in GDP, Navin Berry said "Latest events such as the World Cup and the world of Indian weddings have become new-age drivers for tourism in the country. One is not sure how much of this is being captured by the present statistics. My impression is that

our research and figures need a refresh button, and ensure we have captured the full picture! Regardless, the tourism picture looks healthy with the hotel industry showing record occupancies!"

Mentioning Dr Saxena's efforts in various fields, Dr. SY Quraishi, added, "Dr Saxena's efforts help in creating new DD Bharati Channel and increase of in-house production of DD programs from 6 to 23 per cent without any increase in the existing workforce of DD shows his grit and compassion. The same has been captured well in the book. GG was an exceptional support in our efforts to make Doordarshan compete effectively with the private channels."

PK Tripathy recalled his interaction with GG, though spent more time in commenting upon present day tussle in Delhi government and the ongoing disputes, saying this was a hard time for bureaucrats to serve, not knowing whom they should report to, whom should they listen to, considering the duplicity of authority.

GG kept his affable and humble composure through the evening, preferring to attribute his success to the support and love of his family, naming each of them, for contributing to his career and to the penning of his book. The publication, indeed, serves a useful purpose to document how a civil servant can take each assignment for what it's worth, and effectively making the difference. GG was exceptional in taking up laborious assignments, creating new manuals, ensuring ease in business. A must read for every bureaucrat. **DI**



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