

# India Review

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## India's 1st moon mission to carry NASA payloads



NASA Administrator Michael Griffin and ISRO Chairperson G. Madhavan Nair sign MoU



■ India is elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council ; gets most votes —173 of 191

■ Agriculture sector drives GDP growth to a record 9.3 percent in last quarter of fiscal 2005-2006

■ Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and Under Secretary Burns meet in London to discuss Indo-U.S. nuclear agreement

# Ambassador Sen visits Cleveland, Alabama, Harvard

**I**ndian Ambassador to the U.S. Ronen Sen and his wife Kalpana Sen visited Cleveland from May 5 to 6. Chairman and CEO of Transtar Industries Inc. Monte Ahuja, and Mrs. Ahuja hosted a dinner at their residence at which a large gathering of prominent Indian Americans was present.

Sen delivered the keynote address at a gala dinner "Night of the Golden Peacock" organised by the Cleveland Council on World Affairs as its main annual event.

The Ambassador, accompanied by Mrs. Sen and S.M. Gavai, Consul General of India in Houston, visited the State of Alabama from May 11 to 13, for launching the Alabama-India Business Partnership (AIBP). The AIBP was set up by its current President, Anil K. Agarwal. The Ambassador met the Governor of Alabama, Bob Riley, who remarked that he was impressed by India's economic growth. He observed that both India and Alabama had developed from an agrarian base to advances in high technology involving biotechnology, automotive, aerospace and other sectors. Alabama attracts the second largest research funding in the United States in such high technology areas. Governor Riley accepted the Ambassador's invitation to visit India.

Sen also had a separate discussion with Ron Sparks, Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries.

Ambassador Sen addressed large gatherings in Birmingham and Huntsville, under the auspices of the AIBP,

at which the Mayors and prominent citizens of these cities were present.

The Ambassador and Consul General Gavai also visited Mobile Port and the McDuffe Coal Terminal.

Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), one of the largest private humanitarian organisations in the world, celebrated its 60th anniversary in mid-May this year. Ambassador Sen and Mrs. Sen, as International Chairs for the Anniversary Celebrations, hosted a reception at their residence on May 16 in which prominent personalities from all walks of life, including Senators and Congressmen, participated. Dr. Helene Gayle, CARE's President and CEO, spoke on the occasion, followed by representatives of Cargill, Nortel and ICICI Bank of India, the global sponsors of the Anniversary Celebrations.

Ambassador and Mrs. Sen attended the Memorial Service of late Professor John Kenneth Galbraith at the Harvard University on May 31, which was addressed, among others, by Professor Amartya Sen, Senator Edward Kennedy, former Senator George McGovern, William F. Buckley, Jr., Gloria Steinem. Tributes were paid by Prof. Galbraith's sons J. Alan Galbraith and Peter Galbraith and his biographer Richard Parker. President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance Sonia Gandhi had sent condolence messages earlier to the bereaved family. ■

## ■ Diplomatic Reception hosted by Ambassador Sen in honour of 60th Anniversary Celebrations of CARE



PHOTO LEFT: From left, Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-KS); Vicki Tiahrt, President of Congressional Club, a non-partisan organisation of spouses of House and Senate members, which was national partner of the Anniversary Celebrations; Ambassador Sen and CARE's new president and CEO Dr. Helene Gayle. (Photos, Bill Piacesi)

PHOTO BELOW: Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS) and Franki Roberts, co-chair for the Anniversary Celebrations.



PHOTO ABOVE LEFT: From left, Tiia Karlene, wife of Rep. Rick Larsen (D-WA); Rep. Larsen; Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-KS); and Van Yuetter, Assistant Vice President, International Business Development, Cargill.

PHOTO ABOVE RIGHT: From left, Anniversary Celebration co-chairs Diane Nelson, wife of Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NE); Debbie Dingell, wife of Rep. John Dingell (D-MI); Lynne Pace, wife of Gen. Peter Pace; and civic leader Shirley Robinson Hall; with CARE's new President and CEO Dr. Gayle.

# After rights win, India's UNSC claim strengthened



A view of the first election of 47 members of the newly established U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC) held by the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, at the U.N. Headquarters in New York on May 9. (Photo: United Nations)

**I**ndia's ability to secure the highest number of votes among all countries — 173 out of 191 — in elections to the first United Nations Human Rights Council has boosted its bid for a permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council. "India scored a major success at the U.N. when it was elected to the U.N. Human Rights Council securing the highest number of votes," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Navtej Sarna told reporters in New Delhi on May 10.

"This is recognition of India's diplomatic standing and its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights," stressed Sarna, capturing the mood of enthusiasm in South Block following the huge win.

"It is also a recognition of the success that India has had with its diplomatic demarches made in New York through the U.N. and Indian missions all over the world," the spokesperson added. India will serve on the newly-established council, which replaces the Human Rights Commission, for one year and will play a leading role in devising its rules of procedure. It will work with 46 other countries that were also elected, at the council's first meeting due in Geneva on June 19. Besides an acknowledgment of New Delhi's credible record in human rights, the overwhelming victory also brings to the fore substantial support for India's U.N. Security Council ambitions, a top official said. Indeed, the initiative of the G4 nations (Japan, Brazil, Germany and India) for permanent seats on the U.N. body has received

a tremendous boost, the official added. All other G4 member countries — Brazil (165 votes), Japan (158 votes) and Germany (154 votes) — have done exceedingly well in the elections to the council held on May 9.

India played a leading role in creating the Human Rights Council and was instrumental in persuading members to settle for a compromise between the U.S. demand for a small council with just 35 members and those seeking a large body having at least a third of the General Assembly as its members. The victory also highlights India's stock with the non-aligned countries, which voted in large numbers for New Delhi.

"This is a reflection of non-aligned solidarity. India's solidarity with the G77 group comprising developing nations is intact," said the official.

Most importantly, New Delhi's showing at the council elections reaffirmed and reinforced India's "composite approach to human rights" that includes social, economic and cultural rights.

"It's a broad-based approach that does not believe in finger-pointing but in a participatory, collaborative non-fractious approach. We believe in working in a non-discriminatory manner and carrying everybody along," the official added.

The term of the 47 member countries of the new council was decided by draw of lots. Britain, Japan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will serve in the council for two-year terms. There are other countries such as China, Russia, Germany and Saudi Arabia that will serve for three years. ■

## Blair for India in the UNSC

*British Prime Minister Tony Blair, in a speech at the Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., came out strongly in favour of India's candidature for a permanent seat in an expanded UN Security Council. Excerpts:*

■ "A Security Council which has France as a permanent member but not Germany, Britain but not Japan, China but not India to say nothing of the absence of any representation from Latin America or Africa, cannot be legitimate in the modern world. If necessary let us agree on some form of interim change that can be a bridge to a future settlement."



■ "We should strengthen the U.N. Secretary General's powers to propose action to the Security Council for the resolution of long-standing disputes and encourage him to do so."

(For full text of the speech, visit [www.georgetown.edu](http://www.georgetown.edu))

# NASA, ISRO sign up for historic moon mission



NASA Administrator Dr. Michael Griffin, right, and ISRO Chairman G. Madhavan Nair sign an agreement in Bangalore on May 9, to send two U.S. advanced scientific instruments on board Chandrayaan-I, India's first moon mission, in 2008.

**T**he space agencies of India and United States on May 9 signed a historic agreement to send two American advanced scientific instruments on board Chandrayaan-I, India's first moon mission, in 2008.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Administrator Michael Griffin and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairperson G. Madhavan Nair signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) at the Indian space agency's satellite application centre in Bangalore.

The two NASA instruments to be part of the Chandrayaan payloads are mini synthetic aperture radar (Mini SAR) and moon mineralogy mapper (M3). Mini SAR is being developed by the Applied Physics Laboratory of Johns Hopkins University and funded by NASA, while M3 is being jointly built by Brown University and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) of NASA.

"The objective of SAR is to detect water in the permanently shadowed areas of lunar polar regions, while M3 will map the minerals on the lunar surface and study its characterisation," Nair told reporters.

Chandrayaan-I will be launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) at Sriharikota off the Andhra coast, using an advanced polar satellite launch vehicle (PSLV), into a 240-24,000 km earth orbit and placed subsequently in a 100-km polar orbit around the moon, with its own propulsion system. Terming the agreement as one of the most important milestones between ISRO and NASA, Nair said the

**The international media covered the NASA-ISRO tie-up in a big way. For more stories visit the news sites**

***[www.abcnews.go.com](http://www.abcnews.go.com),  
[www.news.ft.com](http://www.news.ft.com), [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com)  
and [www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com)***

inclusion of the U.S. instruments added fillip to Indo-U.S. cooperation in space, which dates back to the beginning of the Indian space programme.

"We look forward to several more such cooperative missions as we have always believed in achieving more together," Nair said. "With significant advancements in astronautics, it is advantageous to share each other's capabilities and the resulting scientific outputs," he added. Besides the NASA payload, Chandrayaan-I will carry four instruments of the European Space Agency (ESA) and one from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

In addition, the lunar spacecraft will have Indian payloads to conduct various experiments while orbiting the moon for over two years.

In all, Chandrayaan will carry a total of 12 instruments, including five from ISRO, four from ESA, two from NASA and one from Bulgaria.

"NASA is honoured to be a participant in the Indian lunar mission, being conducted about 40 years after humans saw the moon up close for the first time. It will greatly advance the understanding of our closest neighbour in space and rep-

resents an impressive technical achievement," Griffin said in his remarks. Besides mapping the lunar surface, Chandrayaan will investigate its surface properties to advance knowledge about the moon's history and evolution and facilitate future exploration decisions by characterising the content of lunar soil. "Apart from expanding the scientific knowledge of Indian space scientists about the moon, the two-year mission will upgrade India's technological capability and provide opportunities for planetary research for the younger generation," Griffin pointed out.

Indian payloads include a terrain mapping camera, a hyper-spectral imager, a high-energy X-ray spectrometer, a lunar laser ranging instrument and a moon impact probe. The ESA and Bulgarian payloads will be an imaging X-ray spectrometer from Rutherford Appleton Laboratory (Britain), near infra-red spectrometer from Max Planck Institute (Germany), sub keV atom reflecting analyser from the Swedish Institute of Space Physics and a radiation dose monitor from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. ■

## Indo-U.S. Space Cooperation

- Civil Space cooperation is one of the areas identified under the now completed Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP).
- Joint Working Group (JWG) on Civil Space Cooperation established. The JWG serves as a permanent platform for joint review and formulation of policies.
- To facilitate launching of U.S. licensed satellites and also foreign satellites carrying U.S.-controlled items, a Technology Safeguard Agreement has been agreed to safeguard protected technologies of the either side associated with such a mission.
- U.S. has also agreed to permit direct cooperation in developing, producing, marketing, and/or operating Indian and U.S. commercial satellites. The two sides are also exploring the possibilities of cooperation in earth observation, satellite communication, satellite navigation, space science, natural hazards research and disaster management support.

## Specific Areas of Study

- High-resolution mineralogical and chemical imaging of permanently shadowed north and south polar regions.
- Search for surface or sub-surface water-ice on the moon, especially at the lunar pole.
- Identification of chemical end members of lunar high land rocks.
- Chemical stratigraphy of Lunar crust by remote sensing of central upland of large lunar craters, South Pole Aitken Region (SPAR), etc., where interior material may be expected.
- To map the height variation of the lunar surface features along the satellite track.
- Observation of X-ray spectrum greater than 10 keV and stereographic coverage of most of the moon's surface with five metre resolution, to provide new insights in understanding the moon's origin and evolution.

## Chandrayaan-I: Factfile

- Chandrayaan-1 mission is proposed to be a lunar polar orbiter at an altitude of about 100 km and is planned to be launched by 2007-2008 using indigenous spacecraft and launch vehicle of ISRO.
- Mission expected to have an operational life of about two years.
- Chandrayaan-1 is devoted to high-resolution remote sensing of the lunar surface features in visible, near-infrared, X-ray and low energy gamma ray regions.
- This will be accomplished using several payloads already selected for the mission.
- In addition a total of about 10 kilogram payload weight and 10-W power are earmarked for proposals, which are now solicited.

(Source: ISRO)

# It's now for the U.S. Congress to ratify deal: Pranab



**I**ndia has clarified that it is now the turn of the U.S. Congress to “ratify” the civil nuclear energy deal. “We are now interested in getting the agreement ratified by the Congress. From our side, whatever was to be done, we have done,” Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee told reporters in New Delhi on May 24.

“Therefore, let the talks go on,” he added.

India is optimistic about the U.S. Congress clearing the legislation “sooner rather than later”, official sources said. ■

## El Baradei commends N-deal to Congress

**T**he Bush administration on May 24 received a major boost from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the India-U.S. nuclear deal.

Dr. Mohamed El Baradei, Director General of IAEA, commended the deal to the U.S. Congress, describing it as a “win-win agreement” and hoping the U.S. Congress too would see in that light.

“To me, this is a win-win agreement and I hope it will be also for Congress,” he said after a meeting in Washington with the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to discuss, among other things, how to make sure that India became an important partner in the non-proliferation regime.

Rice noted that Dr. El Baradei had been very supportive about

the India-U.S. nuclear deal. ■



## AJC supports nuclear agreement

**A**s the debate continues on the merits of the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal, the powerful American Jewish Committee (AJC) has appealed to the Congress to pass legislation that will give New Delhi access to long-denied civil nuclear energy technology.

In letters written to the head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Richard Lugar and House International Relations Committee chair Henry Hyde, the AJC has called the nuclear deal “strategic” and “forward-looking” and one that will suit the strategic requirements of both countries.

The letters, written by AJC President E. Robert Goodkind and Executive Director David A. Harris, were also sent to top Democrats Joseph Biden and Tom Lantos.

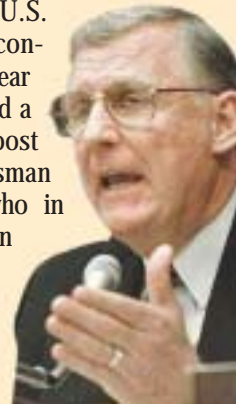
“The AJC strongly supports the proposed U.S.-India civil nuclear energy agreement and urges approval of the enabling legislation,” the AJC said.

India offers the U.S. a “stable, democratic partner in Asia, as well as significant trade and investment opportunities”, the panel said. ■

## Burton comes out in support of deal

**I**ndian efforts to get the U.S. Congress consent on the nuclear deal has received a significant boost with Congressman Dan Burton, who in the past has been critical of various Indian policies, coming out in support of the legislation enabling full civil nuclear cooperation between the two countries.

Republican Burton along with Co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans Gary Ackerman and former co-chairs Joe Crowley and Joe Wilson wrote a letter addressed to all members of the House of Representatives, countering the erroneous assertions made by detractors of the deal. “For 30 years, India has protected its nuclear programmes. It has not engaged in or allowed proliferation of its nuclear technology,” the letter said. ■



## Outlook is positive on India-U.S. N-deal: Saran

**I**ndian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran met with U.S. Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns in London on May 25. The Foreign Secretary, who was on a two-day visit to London for a range of talks with British and U.S. counterparts, said Under Secretary Burns gave him a detailed account of the processes involved in getting the requisite legislation passed in the U.S. Congress.

"Both sides are committed to finalising the agreement as soon as possible. We are on track and the outlook is positive," the Foreign Secretary told newsmen at the High Commission in London after the meeting.

Saran said he presented the Indian draft of the civil nuclear agreement to Burns. He expressed optimism that the agreement would be formalised in a legislation in the U.S. Congress.

Earlier, Saran met with Michael Jay, Permanent Under Secretary in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Office, and exchanged views on a range of bilateral and international affairs, including the preparations for the forthcoming Group of Eight (G8) Summit meeting between the leaders of the G8 and the Outreach countries — including India — to be held in St. Petersburg, Russia, in July.



Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran with U.S. Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns at India House in London on May 25.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will be attending the summit. ■

## Necessary legislation likely to be moved in spring & summer

**T**he India-U.S. nuclear deal appears to be on track with the Bush administration hopeful of moving forward with necessary legislation in the U.S. Congress this spring and summer after two key negotiators met in London this week to address a few sticky points.

"I think that they were able to tie up a couple of loose ends concerning things that the Indian government owed the United States in order to really move forward on this deal," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said in Washington after the London meeting between Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and the U.S. Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns.

"We think it's an important deal: It's good for the U.S., it's

good for India, it's good for the world," he said, underlining the fact that the White House and the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice were "deeply involved" in moving the process forward. Capitol Hill, the seat of Congress, has witnessed a lot of talks and briefings as also hearings on the nuclear deal in recent weeks with Burns too talking to senators and representatives about how to structure the proposed legislation and how to bring it up for a vote, McCormack said.

"Our hope is that we can work with Congress on the structure of the legislation in such a way that they're comfortable, answer the questions that they may have about the legislation, and then work through these issues this spring and summer," he said. ■

## India inks ITER pact with six countries

**I**ndia took another major step on May 24 in its quest for energy security by signing up with six partner countries in Brussels for the ITER (International Thermonuclear Energy Reactor) research project.

"This signifies the start of a major international effort towards developing an energy technology which provides virtually limitless energy," Anil Kakodkar, secretary in the Department of Atomic Energy and Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, said after initialling the agreement on India's behalf. The other signatories are the European Union, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea and the U.S.

Kakodkar said the "programme has potential to provide

access to a much larger quantum of energy," for India's galloping energy needs. India is contributing 10 percent in the form of manufacturing equipment to the ITER project, situated in Cadarache, France.

P.K. Kaw, director of the Institute for Plasma Research who was also representing the Indian side, said India based industries would manufacture components for ITER such as the key configurations and other high-tech heating sources and diagnostic equipment.

The project is expected to start in 2007 and be completed in 2015, after which experiments will be conducted. It is expected to become commercially viable by 2040. ■

## Nine-member delegation of Indian MPs visits U.S.

**A** nine-member, multi-party delegation of young Indian parliamentarians visited the U.S. from May 2 to 8 to project India as a booming economy to the U.S. government and Congress. The members of the delegation were Baijayant Jay Panda (Biju Janata Dal), Deepender Singh Hooda (Congress), Madhu Goud Yaskhi (Congress), Manvendra Singh (Bharatiya Janata Party), Prema Cariappa (Congress), Preneet Kaur (Congress), Sachin Pilot (Congress), Shahid Siddiqui (Samajwadi Party) and Suresh Prabhu (Shiv Sena). The trip was organised by the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII).

At a meeting at the Indian Consulate in New York, members of the delegation briefly elucidated on investment opportunities in the various states which have come about owing to the changing dynamic of the Indian economy.

Following the New York visit, the delegation visited Washington, D.C., where they met U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Deputy National Security Adviser J.D. Crouch. Rice discussed Indo-U.S. relations and spoke specifically about the civil nuclear deal. She reiterated that whatever agreement goes through would be within the framework of the July 18, 2005, agreement. Rice also expressed the hope



The nine-member multi-party delegation of Indian parliamentarians at their meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Washington, D.C., on May 3.

that the deal would go through in the near future.

In Atlanta, the delegation met with Governor of Georgia Sonny Perdue. The MPs also interacted with members of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans during their visit as well as the Center for Disease Control (CDC), U.S. corporates, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), U.S. India Business Council (USIBC), the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) and the National Endowment for Democracy, among others. ■

### 'India provides best returns on FDI'

**I**ndia provides higher returns on foreign direct investment (FDI) than any other country in the world, Minister of State for Industry Ashwani Kumar told American investors in New York. Speaking at a meeting organised on May 17 by the India-American Chamber of Commerce, Kumar said India was poised for a massive expansion in the manufacturing, infrastructure, automobiles and auto-components, and food processing sectors, besides telecommunications.

He urged investors to seize the opportunity for availing themselves of investments in these sectors. "Foreign financial analysts have concluded that India provides maximum return on investments, more than even China," he told the meeting.

Earlier in the week, Kumar participated in the 35th annual country day — "India Day" — in New Jersey, hosted by the New Jersey World Trade Council in collaboration with the Consulate General of India in New York. It was attended by over 250 leading business representatives from industries located in the Tri-state area of the U.S. comprising New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. In his keynote luncheon address, he underlined the importance of the Tri-state area as not only a home to nearly 100 Fortune 500 companies but also home to the largest concentration of skilled Indians in the United States.

Kumar also pointed out the significant change in the structure of India's GDP over the decade-and-a-half of economic reforms. ■



### ■ Visits to India

#### Lavin calls on Kamal Nath

**F**ranklin Lavin, Under Secretary for International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, called on Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Kamal Nath in New Delhi on May 2, and discussed bilateral trade and investment possibilities. It was indicated at the meeting that an Infrastructure Summit for U.S. investors would be organised in Mumbai by the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP) on November 29-30. ■

#### India-U.S. meet on energy

**A** two-day conference of India-U.S. Energy Efficiency Technology Cooperation was held in New Delhi on May 2-3. Members of the discussion panel represented the Ministry of Power, Confederation of Indian Industry, the U.S. Department of Energy (DoE) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The conference explored the barriers to implementation of energy efficiency in various countries and illustrated ways in which such barriers could be overcome. ■

## Nandan Nilekani, Vikram Akula named in *Time* list

**I**nfosys CEO Nandan Nilekani and SKS Microfinance founder Vikram Akula are the two Indians figuring on the list of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people in the world. The *Time* list recognises people "whose power, talent, or example is transforming our world".

While Nilekani is described as responsible for creating the new reality that has produced the new Indian image, Akula is recognised for having revolutionised novel ways of supporting India's poor.

SKS Microfinance, 37-year-old Akula's company, uses advanced technology smart cards to make venture capital available to those in India living on less than \$2 a day.

His company has disbursed loans worth \$52 million to 221,000 people in India. An average loan amounts to around \$116. The idea is that giving very small loans to poor people, particularly women, empowers the individual to make investments for economic self-sustainability. A former management consultant with McKinsey & Company, Akula has over a decade of work and research experience in microfinance. He



Nandan Nilekani



Vikram Akula

was a Fulbright Scholar in India and a researcher with the Worldwatch Institute. He has also worked as a community organiser with the Deccan Development Society in India. He holds a B.A. from Tufts, an M.A. from Yale and has a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

Nilekani, 50, is described as having a unique ability "not simply to programme software but also to explain how that programme fits into the emerging trends in computing, how those trends will transform the computing business and how that transformation will affect global politics and economics". "It was his insight that the global playing field was being 'levelled' by technology that inspired me to write the book 'The World Is Flat'," wrote columnist Thomas Friedman in an article in *Time*.

Among others to figure in the list are Hollywood actors Will Smith and Meryl Streep, director Ang Lee, former German footballer Franz Beckenbauer, U.S. President George W. Bush, former U.S. president Bill Clinton, singer Bono and Microsoft founder Bill Gates and his wife Melinda. ■

### U.S. to help India upgrade aviation standards

**T**he Union Cabinet on May 3 approved the signing of a pact with the U.S., which will help India acquire and receive technical and managerial support for improving standards in aviation.

Briefing reporters on the decisions of the cabinet, Principal Information Officer Deepak Sandhu said, "Approval has been given for the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the two countries."

She said the pact would provide for assistance by the U.S. Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) in developing and modernising civil aviation infrastructure in managerial, operational and technical areas. The U.S. has already signed such agreements with more than 100 countries. The agreement would provide scope for technical and managerial expertise in developing, improving and operating civil aviation infrastructure, standards, procedures, policies, training and equipment.

In view of the agreement, personnel from the Indian civil aviation sector can receive training at the FAA. ■

### India to become a developed economy soon: Chidambaram

**U**nion Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on May 4 exuded confidence that India would join the league of developed nations in "less than 14 years".

Addressing a special session on 'Advantage India' at the 39th annual general meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) board of governors in Hyderabad, Chidambaram said it had taken India 14 years to evolve from a poor and perhaps forgotten country to a thriving and increasingly noticed emerging economy.

"I am confident that it would take us much shorter than 14 years to join the league of developed nations," he said. Stating that India was now among the fastest-growing economies in the world, he said investor confidence in the country was at an all-time high. He pointed out that A.T. Kearney's 'FDI Confidence Index 2005' has ranked India as the second-most attractive investment destination.

A recent World Investment Report has ranked India as the second-most attractive investment destination among transnational corporations. ■



Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram addressing the concluding session of the 39th Annual General Meeting of Board of Governors of Asian Development Bank in Hyderabad on May 4.

**T**he Indian economy grew an impressive 9.3 percent in the January-March quarter in the fiscal year ended March 31, as per the revised data on national income released in New Delhi on June 1. For the fiscal year through March, the Indian economy grew 8.4 percent, exceeding previous forecasts of 8.1 percent, according to data compiled by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

The gross domestic product (GDP) had expanded by 7.5 percent in the last fiscal. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), commenting on the national income statistics said, "CII has long been highlighting the need for double-digit GDP growth, and from that perspective, the last quarter GDP growth of 9.3 percent is welcome news."

The biggest boost came from the farm sector that recorded a higher-than-expected growth of 3.9 percent as against earlier expectations of 2.3 percent. In 2004-05, the farm sector had registered a marginal growth of 0.7 percent.

India is targeting a farm expansion of 4 percent to

# 9.3%

The Indian economy grew at a blistering 9.3% in the last quarter of 2005-2006, taking the overall growth rate for the fiscal to 8.4%.

achieve an overall annual growth of over 8 percent considering that this sector provides livelihood to over 60 percent of the country's population with a 20-

percent share in GDP.

Commenting on the revised growth figure, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said that the country would need to speed up economic reforms to sustain an economic growth rate of over 8 percent.

"We need to make larger capital investments, and such investments are possible only if reforms continue," he told reporters. "The government would remove hurdles that limit the flow of foreign direct investment," he added.

Chidambaram also said that areas like roads, telecommunications, seaports, power and airports would be special areas of focus, even as mining and energy were areas of concern that could slow

down the country's growth.

Among the sectors posting a growth of over 5 percent included manufacturing at 9 percent, electricity, gas and water supply (5.3 percent), construction (12.1 percent), and trade, hotels, transport and communication (11.5 percent).

Finance, insurance, real estate and business services grew 9.7 percent, while community, social and personal services were up 7.8 percent.

(For details, visit <http://finmin.nic.in>)

## India Inc. too on growth path in FY05-06

**T**he performance of India Inc. in 2005-06 reflects a healthy picture. It has achieved significant topline and bottomline growth. An analysis of 531 companies, for which yearly results are currently available, shows that they posted a 23.8 percent rise in their aggregate net profit to Rs. 481.07 billion. Their net sales increased by 19.5 percent to Rs. 4,914.14 billion in 2005-06 from the level of Rs. 4,112.8 billion in 2004-05, the *Financial Express* reported.

Other income rose by 19.2 percent to Rs. 210.360 billion in 2005-06 from Rs. 176.45 billion a year ago. Other income contributes substantially to the spurt in bottomline growth. There has been an improvement in margins at the net profit level. Net profit margins (net profit to sales) improved to 9.8 percent in 2005-06 from 9.4 percent in 2004-05.

(For details, visit [www.financialexpress.com](http://www.financialexpress.com))

## ■ News In Brief

### RBI Annual Policy statement

**With an aim** to maintaining macro-economic and financial stability with GDP growth at 7.5-8.0 percent and inflation at 5.0-5.5 percent, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced its Annual Policy Statement for 2006-07. Changes announced include raising of ceiling on interest rates on non-resident (external) rupee deposits for one to three years maturity by 25 basis points to 100 basis points above LIBOR/SWAP rates for U.S. dollar of corresponding maturity, and raising of ceiling interest rate on export credit in foreign currency by 25 basis points to LIBOR plus 100 basis

points from LIBOR plus 75 points.  
(For details, visit [www.rbi.org.in](http://www.rbi.org.in))

### FMCG sector profits rise

**A recovery in** consumer offtake has led to fast moving consumer good (FMCG) companies posting good results in the financial year 2005-06, notwithstanding pressures from rising material costs and a sharp increase in advertising expenditure during the year, *The Economic Times* reported. Overall, net sales increased 11 percent to Rs. 206.76 billion, while net profit increased 22.4 percent to Rs. 28.29 billion. Other income increased by about 9 percent during the year.

### Railways-private partnership

**An initiative by** Indian Railways to introduce private sector participation in running of container trains has received an encouraging response, with 12 proposals from private companies receiving in-principle approval of the Ministry of Railways to start operations. The model concession agreement for public-private partnership in container movement is under preparation by the Rail India Technical and Economic Services (RITES). The Railways is also planning to build Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC) to connect four metropolises on a public-private partnership.

## Intel plans chip testing facility in India

**G**lobal chipmaker Intel Corporation plans to set up an assembly-cum-testing plant in India instead of a fab (fabrication) facility, a top company official said in Bangalore on May 23.

"We are in discussion with the Indian government for setting up an ATMP (assembly-test-mark-pack) plant in India with partners. There are, however, no plans to set up a fab facility," Intel chief executive Paul Otellini told reporters.

Declining to make specific announcement about the proposed ATMP plant, Otellini said Intel would continue to focus on designing and developing chips for driving innovation at a global level from its India development centre in Bangalore.

"We believe knowledge intensive action has much more value than getting a fab. As our largest development site outside the U.S., the Indian R&D facility will play a key role in designing and developing computing technologies, including low-cost computers for countries like India where PC penetration is still very low," Otellini said.

Though Intel's lesser rival Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) has licensed its technology to SemIndia Inc. for locating an ATMP plant and a fab facility near Hyderabad, it (Intel) has not specified timeline for its own assembly-cum-testing facility in the sub-continent.

Union IT and communications minister Dayanidhi Maran has been persuading Intel to set up a chip fabrication plant or an ATMP unit, which is estimated to cost about \$400 million, according to industry analysts. ■

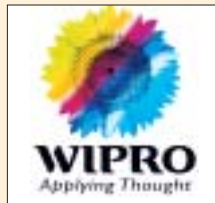


Chief Executive Officer, Intel Corporation, Paul Otellini displays Intel's new device — Eduwise — at a press conference in Bangalore on May 23.

## Wipro acquires U.S. design firm for \$10 million

**W**ipro Ltd. on May 15 announced the acquisition of the mechanical design and analysis services division of U.S.-based Quantech Global Services LLC for \$10.2 million in an all-cash deal. A Wipro official, however, said the value of the acquisition includes the division's anticipated revenues over the next three years.

"About 500 domain specialists of the Quantech services division, which has operations in Bangalore and Hyderabad, besides Michigan in the U.S., will join our global IT services division to strengthen our offerings in the aerospace and automotive engineering outsourcing business," Wipro Technologies



chief operating officer A.L. Rao told reporters in Bangalore.

According to industry sources, the engineering outsourcing business in the subcontinent is estimated to be about \$200 million and growing at about 30 percent per annum.

"Our customers are looking for complete product engineering services. Quantech's key strength in mechanical design services complements our core strength in embedded software and system design capabilities," Rao said.

The 16-year-old \$13-million Quantech has about 20 customers, including General Motors, Delphi, Mazda and Toyota. ■

## Tech Briefs

### Infosys to hire techies from U.S.

Global IT software major Infosys Technologies plans to hire about 300 graduates from U.S. universities and 25 graduates from Britain to create a diversified, global workforce. According to a company statement, the recruitment in the U.S. will bring in about 100 graduates from American colleges to India in August for developing their engineering skills at the Infosys Global Education Centre in Mysore. After a six-month training, the techies will return to work at Infosys offices in the U.S.

### SunTec's telecom software in U.S.

Leading Kerala-based software company SunTec on May 4 launched its telecom software products at the TeleStrategies Billing and Operational Support Systems World 2006 show being held in the U.S. SunTec presented its end-to-end Internet protocol television (IPTV) billing solution and transaction business management system (TBMS) IPTV at the exhibition in Miami, Florida. IPTV is emerging as a key vehicle for telecom operators, cable Multiple System Operators (MSOs) and satellite providers to launch innovative services for their subscribers.

### Microsoft's summer school

**Microsoft Research India** (MRI) is organising a three-week summer school in Bangalore for tech graduates and researchers on cryptography, algorithms and security. Held from May 22 to June 10 in partnership with the mathematics department of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) at the IISc campus, the school will focus on the critical areas not available in textbooks or covered in the academic syllabus.

### Satyam enters billion-dollar club

**Satyam Computer Services Ltd.**, India's fourth-largest software exporter, on May 19 announced its entry into the billion-dollar club. Satyam is the fourth Indian information technology company to cross \$1 billion in revenue. The company posted revenues of Rs. 47.93 billion, a growth of 36.12 percent over the last fiscal (Rs. 35.2 billion). ■

## Manufacturing on growth trajectory

**T**he Indian manufacturing sector is on a growth trajectory with as many as 70 out of 143 sectors reporting production registering medium to high growth in a new survey. The survey has been carried out by the Associations Council of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII-Ascon) for April 2005-March 2006.

“Out of the total of 143 sectors reporting production, 36 sectors recorded an excellent growth rate of more than 20 percent while 36 sectors recorded a high growth rate of 10-20 percent,” the survey report stated.

Fifty-six sectors registered moderate growth rate of 0-10 percent while 15 sectors reported negative growth. “A larger number of sectors were in the excellent growth (of over 20 percent) category shifting from high growth (10-20 percent) in this period as compared to the third quarter (September-December) results. Out of the 76 sectors reporting sales, 25 sectors registered excellent growth, 24 registered high growth and 23 sectors reported moderate growth. According to the survey, the Indian manufacturing industry is showing a recovery on the export front as compared to the Q3 results.

The study indicates that 18 sectors have shown excellent growth in exports. Seven sectors witnessed high growth, while 15 recorded moderate growth. ■

(For details, visit [www.ciionline.org](http://www.ciionline.org))

### CII-ASCON SURVEY

- Indian manufacturing industry shows a recovery on the export front as compared to Q3 results.
- Out of the total of 143 sectors reporting production, 36 sectors record excellent growth rate of more than 20 percent.
- 36 sectors record a high growth rate of 10-20 percent.
- 56 sectors register moderate growth rate of 0-10 percent.
- Out of 76 sectors reporting sales, 25 sectors register excellent growth, 24 register high growth and 23 sectors report moderate growth.
- In exports, 18 sectors show excellent growth, 7 sectors witness high growth and 15 record moderate growth.

### DATA COMM RESEARCH COMPANY SURVEY

- India adds five million mobile phone subscribers per month.
- Number of subscribers added each month has more than tripled over the past year.
- Set to become the world's second-largest mobile phone market by 2008.
- Passes Japan in total subscribers base.
- Set to break through 100 m subscriber mark.

## India to soon surpass U.S., Russia in mobile phone base

**I**ndia is on track to surpass the U.S. and Russia in mobile phone user base, thanks to the accelerating growth of the wireless communications network in the country, says a study by a leading research firm.

“Adding five million subscribers per month, India will become the world's second-largest mobile phone market by 2008,” says the study — ‘India's Wireless Market: Model for the Next Phase of Global Wireless Expansion’. The report, conducted for Datacomm Research Company, says India's wireless boom is largely the result of government decisions on competition.

“India passed Japan in total subscribers last month. In the next few weeks, it will break through the 100 million subscriber barrier,” the 86-page report says. “The number of mobile phone subscribers added each month in India has more than tripled over the past year,” the report adds. ■

(For details, visit [www.datacommresearch.com](http://www.datacommresearch.com))

### Business Briefs

#### Citigroup picks up 9% in HDFC

The world's largest financial services player, Citigroup, has moved in to acquire 9.27 percent in HDFC — India's top mortgage lender and one of its most valuable brands, *The Economic Times* reported. The Rs. 30.2 billion deal, once cleared by the regulatory authorities, will make Citigroup the largest shareholder in HDFC. Citi will buy the shares held by U.K. insurer, Standard Life. Citigroup already holds 3.59 percent in HDFC. The proposed transaction will take Citigroup's stake in HDFC to a little below 13 percent.

#### JP Morgan's Rs. 15 billion fund

An asset management company of JP Morgan Chase & Co is contemplating a Rs. 15 billion fund for investing in the Indian real estate sector soon, Anthony Ryan, head, real estate investment banking, JP Morgan, told the *Financial Express*. JP Morgan Chase & Co is a leading global financial services firm with assets of \$1.2 trillion and operations in more than 50 countries.

#### World's 2nd largest Levi's store

Jeans major Levi's on May 10 opened its largest store in the Asia Pacific region and the second-largest in the world spread over 9,000 sq ft in Bangalore, according to a *PTI* report. Conceived and built to appeal to the most discerning customers, the store spans over three different levels, capturing different sides of the 150 year-old iconic brand, the report said.

#### Afila to expand operations in India

**Afila Inc.**, a communication testing firm promoted by an Indian technocrat in the Silicon Bay area, California, plans to invest \$4 million to expand its operational facility in India over the next 18 months. The five-year-old, U.S.-headquartered firm will build additional infrastructure and testing labs for providing its services in leading-edge technologies such as metro ethernet, voice-over-IP, security, triple play (voice, video, data) and testing for WiMax. As part of its plans, the Bangalore-based subsidiary will strengthen its existing testing labs and double its current workforce. ■

## India most attractive place for retailers

**I**ndia has emerged as the world's most attractive destination for mass merchants and food retailers, outperforming China for the second year in a row, according to global consulting firm A.T. Kearney.

A.T. Kearney's Global Retail Development Index (GRDI), which ranks 30 emerging countries based on a set of 25 variables including economic and political risk, retail market attractiveness and retail saturation levels, has retained India's position at the top.

The report states India's estimated \$350 billion retail market is expected to grow at 13 percent with an 8 percent GDP, pushing India to the number one spot.

The report noted that the Indian government has been cautious in its moves to open up the retail sector to foreign direct investment (FDI). On the permission to allow FDI up to 51 percent in single-brand retail, the report said: "This is a significant break for global retailers and will spark a flurry of investment. Already, companies including Gap, Zara, Timex and United Colors of Benetton have announced plans to enter the market."

The study also found Asia has overtaken Eastern Europe as the dominant region for global retail expansion, with 40 percent of the top 20 markets, as compared to 35 percent for Eastern Europe.

Meanwhile, China declined one more place in this year's ranking, falling to fifth. While China remains very attractive, the market is becoming increasingly saturated as international retailers rush to establish a presence and build market share, the report stated. ■

### THE 2006 GLOBAL RETAIL DEVELOPMENT INDEX (GRDI)

2006 rank	Country	GRDI score
1	India	100
2	Russia	85
3	Vietnam	84
4	Ukraine	83
5	China	82

Source: EuromonEy, World Bank, Global Competitiveness report 2005 and A.T. Kearney analysis.

## India gains 10 points, bags 29th place in 2006 World Competitiveness Yearbook

**I**ndia has gained 10 spots to bag the 29th place in the latest World Competitiveness Yearbook released by the International Institute of Management Development (IIMD), according to a *PTI* report.

The 2006 yearbook, which ranks 61 economies on the basis of economic performance, government and business efficiency and infrastructure, ranked the U.S. as the world's leading economy followed by Hong Kong and Singapore. Apart from India, China also moved up the rankings, jumping 12 spots to finish at the 19th spot.

"The proliferation of powerful new local enterprises and brands in China and India illustrates how quickly the world is producing new actors and competitors," the study said. The report noted that the U.S. and France are still the second- and fifth-largest exporters in the world thanks to very dynamic enterprises. In both nations, business outperforms government.

"India and China face similar gaps between government and economic performance, but for different reasons. With growth rates of 8.1 percent and 9.9 percent, respectively, both governments face the challenge of keeping pace with rapid economic expansion," said the report, recently released in Lausanne (Switzerland).

The task of the two countries now is to meet the standards and expectations of a buoyant economy, it said. ■

## Exports Watch

### Indian exports grew 27% in April

The performance of India's merchandise exports for the current fiscal began on a positive note with a growth of 27.08 percent in April, trade data showed on May 26. Exports in April were valued at \$8.347 billion, as against \$6.568 billion in the corresponding month of 2005, shows the statistics on foreign trade data released by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics.

### India's textile exports surge

India's textile exports continue to surge despite increasing competition from China and will surpass the 2006-07 fiscal target of \$19.7 billion, Textile Minister Sankersinh Vaghela said in New Delhi on May 24. "The sustained surge in textile exports is continuing despite competition from countries like China and helping to increase the competitiveness of the Indian textile sector. We expect to surpass the target of \$19.7 billion this year up from \$17 billion in 2005-06," Vaghela told reporters.

### Car exports zooms 47 percent

A welcome reversal the numbers of Maruti Udyog and a strong performance by Hyundai India saw car exports from India begin the new fiscal with a strong 47 percent growth at 15,497 units, *The Economic Times* reported. According to figures released by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), Maruti Udyog reported an export growth of 27.5 percent in overseas sales at 1,553 units. Korean car company Hyundai's India subsidiary saw shipments going up by 65.4 percent to 10,842 units.

### Auto component exports climb

Exports of auto components from India have clocked a record compounded annual growth rate of 33 percent in the last three years, owing to a huge increase in sourcing of auto components from India by several developed countries. Value-realisation from India's auto components exports are projected to touch \$25 billion by 2015, as many Indian companies are snapping up plants and operations overseas to gain direct access to global OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers). ■

## Indian-American on NASA mission

**S**unita Williams, an Indian American astronaut, has been named as a crew member in the 14th International Space Station (ISS) expedition, undertaken by National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA), as part of its six-month mission, due to begin in September this year. In her maiden journey to outer space, Williams will join Expedition 14 in progress, to serve as a flight engineer, after travelling to the station on space shuttle mission STS-116.

Her selection caps the prospects that began in 2003, when she was selected by NASA as a backup crew member for one of its missions to the space station orbiting about 240 miles above earth.

Born on September 19, 1965 in Euclid, Ohio, Williams is the second astronaut of Indian origin after Kalpana Chawla — whose space expedition ended in a tragic odyssey aboard the space shuttle Columbia on February 1, 2003.

Williams will be the third woman astronaut to serve on an expedition crew, following Susan Helms on Expedition 2 in 2001, and Peggy Whitson on Expedition 5 in 2002. ■



### ■ National Geographic Bee

#### Indian origin student grabs title



Bonny Jain



Neeraj  
Sirdeshmukh



Yeshwant  
Kandimalla

**A** 12-year-old Indian-American has been crowned the “2006 National Geographic Champion Bee” in Washington, while the two other top honours also went to Indian American school students. Bonny Jain, the winner of the May 24 event, is an eighth-grader from Woodrow Wilson Middle School in Moline, Illinois.

He won a \$25,000 college scholarship for his effort, besides winning a lifetime membership to the prestigious National Geographic Society.

Jain won a tie-breaker against two other Indian-origin teenagers, Neeraj Sirdeshmukh from New Hampshire and Yeshwant Kandimalla from Georgia. Second-place winner Sirdeshmukh, a 14-year-old eighth-grader received a \$15,000 college scholarship while the third place and a \$10,000 college scholarship went to Kandimalla, a 13-year-old eighth-grader. ■

### New financial service launched for NRIs

**T**he Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), in association with UTI Bank, has launched a new service aimed at helping Indians abroad investing in India. A new Financial Information Service, part of MOIA's Pravasi Bharatiya Seva (PBS), covers investment opportunities in India ranging from mutual funds, equity and fixed income avenues to tax issues relevant to overseas Indians and the real estate market in India.

PBS is an MOIA initiative to provide financial information in a simple and comprehensive way, covering the entire range from basics to analytics in each sector to Indians living abroad. Users can log on to [www.nricconnect.co.in/nri](http://www.nricconnect.co.in/nri) or [www.overseasindian.in](http://www.overseasindian.in) for more details. ■

### ■ Science and Technology

#### Regional Navigation Satellite

**T**he Union Cabinet on May 9 approved the development and deployment of an Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) that will include an independent, indigenously developed constellation of satellites to provide navigation and timing services for critical national applications. The IRNSS will cost Rs.14.20 billion, with a foreign exchange component of Rs.11.00 billion excluding launch services. The IRNSS satellites will be launched using India's PSLV.

#### Telemedicine network

**T**he Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on May 16 expanded its telemedicine network to four more speciality hospitals across the country. The ISRO will provide the telemedicine facility to Manipal in Bangalore, Ganga Ram hospital in New Delhi, Madras Diabetic Research Foundation in Chennai and Venkatrao Dawle Medical Foundation in Maharashtra. The network is aimed at linking remote or rural district hospitals with super-speciality hospitals in major cities.

#### Global awards in physics

**H**amsa Padmanabhan, a 16-year old from Pune, has bagged three international awards for her research project in physics. Her paper “Physics of a simple prototype for static magnetic levitation”, won \$1,500 second prize at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). She also bagged the first prize award of \$2,000 from United Technologies Corp. The American association for physics teachers and American physics society also jointly awarded Hamsa the third prize of \$300. ■

# HIMALAYAN SKI VILLAGE PROJECT GOES TO FORD

A view of the snow-covered slopes near Manali in Himachal Pradesh

**T**he Himachal Pradesh government on May 25 gave its nod to a \$250 million tourism-cum-skiing project promoted by Alfred Ford, American auto giant Henry Ford's great-grandson.

A meeting of the state cabinet decided to sign the implementation agreement (IA) with Ford's Himalayan Ski Village, an official spokesman said. The project has been described as the largest foreign domestic investment (FDI) in the tourism sector in the country. The Himalayan Ski Village had carried out a detailed project report for the proposed ski village that will come up near the popular resort town of Manali in the high mountains of the Kullu-Manali region, some 280 km from Shimla.

Work is scheduled to start on the project later this year and is expected to be completed in three years. Alfred Ford also visited the project site late last year.

The investment is expected to take place in three stages, company officials said. The company plans to build 700 five-star rooms, 300 Swiss villas, 2,420 food court-type restaurant seats and a handicrafts village.

The base park will hold 1,000 vehicles and a high-tech "gondola" will ferry 500 passengers every hour to an altitude of 14,000 feet above sea level.

Colorado-based architect Jack Zehren has reportedly been hired to design the resort to merge with the local traditional Himalayan architecture of wood and stone houses with slated roofs.

## NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

**Arjun Gufa (Cave):** Four kms from Manali towards Naggar, the cave is situated near Prini village. This is a good 1/2 day excursion with charming view of the high mountains.

**Brighu Lake:** In Kullu district, the beautiful Brighu lake lies east of Rohtang Pass and is about six kms from the village of Bulaba. The shores of this clear water lake are devoid of human habitation, yet it is visited regularly by the people of the area.

**Hadimba Temple:** Manali has many attractions but the chief centre of interest, historically and archeologically, is undoubtedly the temple

dedicated to goddess Hadimba. It has four-tiered Pagoda shaped roof and the doorway is

carved with legendary figures and symbols. It is a pleasant experience to stroll in the temple complex, which was built in 1533 A.D. A large festival is held here in May.

**Rohtang Pass (3979 m):** Rohtang pass is 51 kms from Manali on the highway to Keylong/Leh. It offers a panoramic and spectacular mountain view. The pass is open from June to October each year although trekkers can cross it earlier. It is a gateway to Lahaul Spiti, Pangi and Leh valley just as Zojila pass is a gateway to Ladakh. There are beautiful sights of glaciers, peaks and Chandra river flows down to the Lahaul valley. Slightly to the left can be seen the twin peaks of the Geypan.

**Solang Valley:** A splendid 13 km valley between Solang village and Beas Kund, Solang valley offers the view of glaciers and snow-capped mountains and peaks. It has fine ski slopes. The Mountaineering Institute has installed a ski lift here for those training to ski. ■

## TOURIST INFORMATION

### How to get there

**By Air:** The nearest airport is situated at Bhuntar — 50 kms. It takes 90 minutes to reach Kullu from Delhi.

**By Rail:** The nearest railhead is at Chandigarh — 272 km.

**By Road:** There are regular bus services for Kullu and Manali from Delhi (611 kms) and Chandigarh (272 kms). Deluxe bus services are also operated by Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) from Shimla (240 kms).

### Climate

**Summer:** May to September

**Winter:** November to February

### Best time to visit

April to Mid-July and September to November

### Where to stay

Span Resorts, Hotel Manali Ashok, Timber Trail, Vacres Manali Resorts, Piccadilly Hotel, Holiday Inn Manali, Snowcrest Manor, The Manali Inn, Banon Resorts, Kanishka Hotel.

For more information, visit

[www.www.hptdc.nic.in](http://www.www.hptdc.nic.in)  
[www.incredibleindia.org](http://www.incredibleindia.org)

## ■ Sending Relief to Quake-hit Indonesia



Relief material such as tents and medicines for the victims of the devastating quake in Indonesia being loaded in an Indian Air Force (IAF) IL-76 cargo aircraft from Indian Army trucks, in New Delhi on May 29. Nearly 5,000 people were killed, many thousands more injured and as many as 200,000 left homeless when a 6.3-magnitude quake demolished homes across the densely-populated region of Yogyakarta on May 27. India joined the global relief efforts almost immediately.

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