

# INDIA @ 75

## Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav



As the Nation celebrates

Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav

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SING THE  
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Nomita Dhar  
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

# Setting in Motion the Juggernaut of Greater Sustainable Development

India@75 marks a major milestone in India's all-round growth and resurgence in the India-Singapore engagement on many fronts. Launched on 12 March 2021, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is an initiative commemorating 75 years of progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements. The 75 week countdown to India's 75th anniversary of Independence will end a year later— on 15th August, 2022.

This extravaganza of events is dedicated to the people of India, who have not only been instrumental in bringing the country thus far in its evolutionary journey, but also hold within them the power and potential to enable Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of activating India 2.0, fuelled by the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

An embodiment of all that is progressive about India's socio-cultural, political and economic identity, the Mahotsav will showcase India's development across all sectors since 1947, with the aim of filling the nation with pride over its many accomplishments.

The astonishing heritage of its historical civilisation, its enviable geo-strategic location, its massive labour force and a formidable consumer market are all conducive for setting in motion the juggernaut of even greater progress in the years to come. The citizens of this great country are all stakeholders in this journey as India, today, capitalizes on its agenda of being amongst the largest and fastest growing emerging market economies of the world.

Ties between India and Singapore are anchored in strong commercial, cultural and people-to-people connections that go back over a millennium. This robust relationship was celebrated further with the Strategic Partnership in 2015 during the visit of PM Modi, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two nations. India-Singapore relations are based on shared values and approaches, economic opportunities and convergence of interests on key issues. This growing regard and respect for each other has also translated into over 20 regular bilateral mechanisms, dialogues and exercises between the two nations. Exchange of visits at very high levels, in governance and people-to-people ties through trade and commerce, business, culture and the spiritual space, continue to be pivotal in shoring up these centuries-old ties. The COVID-19 pandemic and the joint efforts of Singapore and India to combat it have brought the two nations even closer, despite facing the most challenging times on the socio-economic front.

India@75 is a watershed in the on-going progress of a great nation, which continues to engage with the global community in matters related to the economy, science and technology and culture, to add more lustre to this incredible odyssey.

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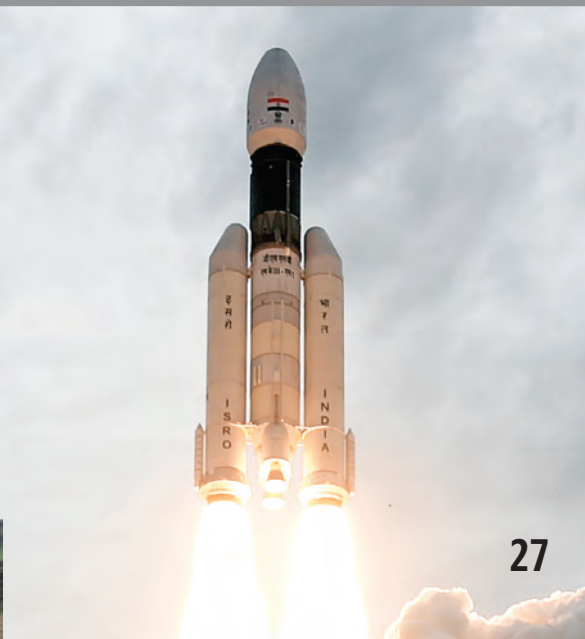
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# INDIA@75

## 15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST

75  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav

## Enhancing a Strategic Partnership with **Singapore** and **ASEAN**



**High Commissioner of India H.E. P. Kumaran in his first message for the commemoration of India's Independence Day in Singapore shares with INDIA@75 Publisher and Editor-in-Chief Nomita Dhar the highlights of the key milestones of India's journey and her achievements**

**What does India's celebration of 75 years of Independence signify for you personally and in the context of the activities planned by the High Commission to mark this occasion? Could you please share some of the key milestones along this journey?**

India is at the threshold of a historic milestone of its 75th year as an independent nation. For nearly 1.35 billion people, it is a moment to reflect on the joys of freedom, the blessings of opportunities and the progress of a remarkable journey.

Our celebrations, therefore, will have a number of dimensions. They will be a tribute to our freedom fighters who sacrificed their careers and lives for our future, our armed forces who stand guard day and night to secure our borders, our post-Independence leaders over the years who have contributed to bring India to where it stands today, and our proud culture and traditions.

It is remarkable that our Independence was achieved as a result of a non-violent movement which drew from all segments of society, thanks to the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. You would recall that India was a very poor country in 1947, with recurring famines and health crises and a literacy rate of just about 17%, amidst bewildering diversity. In 1950, we adopted the longest written Constitution in the world and held universal adult franchise-based elections soon thereafter. Skeptics did not give India much of a chance to survive as a united democratic nation state. But, guided by our timeless ethos and values, and the ideals written into our Constitution, we have moved forward as one nation and one people. We have nurtured our diversity, empowered the weak and placed the welfare of the poorest at the heart of our economic choices.

We have overcome many challenges. We have notched many successes, from addressing hunger and disease to lifting millions of people out of poverty and





# HIGH COMMISSIONER'S INTERVIEW



engineering a Green Revolution, a White Revolution, successful programmes in the areas of space and atomic energy, developing a vibrant heavy industry and IT sector, a world-class pharmaceutical industry and significant achievements in technology, research and education. Today, in eloquent testimony to the quality of our institutions of higher education, Indian professionals head some of the largest multinational corporations in the world. Scepticism of many in the world at our birth has now given way to a universal recognition of India as one of the anchors of global peace and prosperity.

While this is undoubtedly an occasion for celebration, it is also a time for stock-taking and to analyse what remains to be done and what could have been done better, as part of the continuous process of introspection and self-improvement. We know that challenges persist in the unfulfilled hopes of millions. But, our journey so far gives us confidence for the road ahead. And, at 75, we move forward with new resolve, energy and enterprise.

The success of one-sixth of humanity makes the world a better place. It is not just because of the economic opportunities it creates, but even more

because the world that India is striving to build is mirrored in our ideals - of peace, inclusion, justice, democracy, rule of law and sustainability.

**Please tell us about the current state of the India-Singapore bilateral relationship, including in the context of cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic. What are the emerging areas of cooperation?**

Singapore and India have a remarkable historical connection and continue to be closely linked in many areas. Our political leadership is closely aligned in its thinking, as we look at Singapore as a springboard for our ASEAN strategy and work closely to enhance our trade and investment partnership. There are nearly 30 regular bilateral mechanisms, dialogues and exercises. There is great convergence on a broad range of international issues, and both are members of a number of forums, including the East Asia Summit, Commonwealth, IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) and IONS (Indian Ocean Naval Symposium).

Trade and economic ties between Singapore and India are extensive and growing. Singapore's financial hub status, high levels of success in developing vocational skills and knowledge of

(Above row): 

- High Commissioner P. Kumaran presented his credentials to President Halimah Yacob on 25th August 2020. Some rare non-virtual activities at High Commission
- Presentation of certificates to course participants of Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy course
- Launch of International Day of Yoga 2021

**"Our celebrations, therefore, will have a number of dimensions. They will be a tribute to our freedom fighters who sacrificed their careers and lives for our future, our armed forces who stand guard day and night to secure our borders, our post-Independence leaders over the years who have contributed to bring India to where it stands today, and our proud culture and traditions."**

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**“I am proud that the Indian diaspora in Singapore stepped forward to contribute generously to the COVID relief effort in India, both in monetary terms and by leveraging their professional networks... I would like to particularly mention the Pan IIM Alumni Association, Pan IIT Alumni Association, Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), LISHA (Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association), the Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE), Global Indian International School (GIIS), several Indian regional associations and SUMO, a combined effort by Indian-origin alumni of the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University. We are also grateful to Indian companies in Singapore, such as the IOCL, GAIL, ITC, Tata Group, Adani and Reliance for their timely assistance.”**

the ASEAN market, combined with India's long-term growth prospects, land availability, and a large and young workforce willing to work at affordable wages offers complementarity that can be exploited for mutual benefit. In addition, there are a number of areas such as research and innovation, start-ups, fintech, artificial intelligence, logistics, pharmaceuticals and vaccines that offer huge opportunities for partnership. We hope to pursue as many of these as possible in the coming months and years.

We also have a growing defence partnership underpinned by regular dialogue at high levels, covering a number of areas including training, joint exercises, ship visits etc. In fact, the joint naval exercises have been held every year for the past 27 years without a break - a unique record!

Cultural linkages between India and Singapore span the millennia. The long and unique history of people-to-people connections is what makes bilateral cooperation in the field of culture a living, dynamic and joyous celebration of the music, dance, arts, languages and traditions that bring our peoples together, and contributes towards the vitality of our bilateral economic and political relationship. We have to develop these further and engage the younger generation on both sides in the coming years.

The past year and a half has been anything but normal. Almost every aspect of human life and interactions have been impacted by the pandemic. We have tried to maintain the pace of bilateral engagements as much as possible through online platforms.

When COVID-19 first hit last year, India supported Singapore by keeping the supply chains of essential goods open. This year, India and Singapore worked together to meet India's urgent needs during the devastating second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India. Singapore's status as a trade and logistics

hub enabled us to speedily procure and transport cryogenic oxygen tanks, oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators and other items to India. We are grateful to the Government of Singapore, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Enterprise Singapore and Temasek Foundation for their unstinting support and facilitation at a time of critical need.

I am proud that the Indian diaspora in Singapore stepped forward to contribute generously to the COVID relief effort in India, both in monetary terms and by leveraging their professional networks to source items of urgent need in India. I would like to particularly mention the Pan IIM Alumni Association, Pan IIT Alumni Association, Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), LISHA (Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association), the Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE), Global Indian International School (GIIS), several Indian regional associations and SUMO, a combined effort by Indian-origin alumni of the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University. We are also grateful to Indian companies in Singapore, such as the IOCL, GAIL, ITC, Tata Group, Adani and Reliance for their timely assistance.

**We have witnessed all-round reductions in trade and investment levels due to the COVID-19 pandemic. How has the India-Singapore trade and investment relationship been affected by the pandemic? What are the changes you expect to see once the pandemic is behind us?**

Since the signing of CECA in 2005, the India-Singapore partnership has witnessed a significant expansion. Singapore has become India's largest trade partner in ASEAN. It is India's 6th largest trade partner (2020-21) globally, with a share of about 3% of India's overall trade. Over the last 20 years, the total investment into India from Singapore is more than US\$ 115 billion and this



# HIGH COMMISSIONER'S INTERVIEW



accounts for over 21% of the total FDI inflows. More than 80% of listed offshore bonds by Indian issuers are listed on the Singapore Exchange (SGX).

Over 8000 Indian companies are registered in Singapore and over 440 companies from Singapore are registered in India. The large presence of Indian companies in Singapore is reflected in the outward Indian FDI into Singapore of nearly US\$ 71 billion between 2008 and 2021, making Singapore one of the top destinations for Indian investments across sectors.

Even during the pandemic, Singapore has retained its position as the largest source of foreign investment in India. India received a record US\$ 81 billion of FDI during the financial year 2020-21, with Singapore being the biggest investor, accounting for 29% of this amount. On the other hand, bilateral trade in 2020-21 declined by about 10%, falling to US\$ 22 billion.

India and Singapore are also collaborating in cutting edge areas that will shape the future in the context of accelerating technological disruption - fintech, information technology, cybersecurity, skill development, smart city solutions and renewable energy, to name a few. The exciting start-up environments in India and Singapore are also actively engaging with each other.

The pandemic has served as a wakeup call in many ways. The landscape and

the nature of global politics were, in any case, already changing before the pandemic. What COVID-19 did was to add health security, trade security and job security to the mix. Countries and businesses have begun working on minimizing supply chain disruptions by reshoring and near-shoring operations, and diversifying FDI partners, in a way that minimizes sourcing risks. Diversifying sourcing options, along with the management of geopolitical risks, has led to the announcement of significant regional initiatives for enhancing the resilience of supply chains. The shifting of the focus on developing resilient supply chains and logistics opens new opportunities between India and Singapore. Given Singapore's impressive success in skill development, collaboration in skill development across these tech-driven sectors and others may be advantageous.

Before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Singapore was directly connected to 18 Indian cities by 8 airlines. There were about 500 weekly flights both ways in total. In 2019, about 1.42 million Indian tourists (compared with 1.27 million Indian tourists in 2018) visited Singapore, making India the third largest source of tourism to Singapore. On the other hand, nearly 200,000 Singaporean tourists visit India per year.

The pandemic posed a severe challenge to all, including the Indian community in Singapore, particularly the skilled and unskilled workers. We are hopeful



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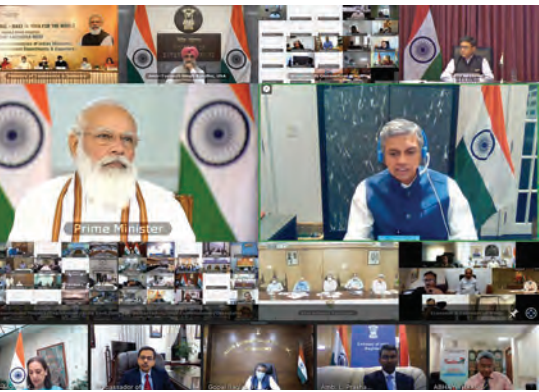
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CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

**Bank of Baroda, Singapore**

# HIGH COMMISSIONER'S INTERVIEW



**“The Indian economy is witnessing a robust recovery and our GDP is on track to surpass pre-COVID-19 levels this year....FDI into India during the COVID-19 period has been the highest ever, reaching US\$ 81.72 billion in 2020-21. Our exports for the period April-June 2021 have also shown robust performance. In just the first six months of 2021, we have seen 15 Indian startups reach unicorn status.”**

that the carefully-calibrated loosening of restrictions by the Singapore government will allow economic activity to grow to pre-pandemic levels, with travel links restored over a period of time.

**How has the Indian economy coped with the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic? Is the Government of India taking special steps to revive economic growth in the coming months?**

COVID-19 has tested many things we have taken for granted, including globalisation and the free functioning of market forces and supply chains. It has compressed years of tech adoption into a few months and has precipitated significant shifts in our technological behaviour, including greater reliance on video conferencing, online shopping, socialization, WFH and distance learning. This has accelerated growth in the areas of digitalisation, cyber security and data centres. It remains to be seen whether these changes become permanent or if they will snap back after the pandemic. A large number of jobs have disappeared. Some businesses have lost out in a big way while others have seen opportunity in this crisis.

The Indian economy is witnessing a robust recovery and our GDP is on track to surpass pre-COVID-19 levels this year. Due to the rapid rise in COVID-19 cases, the economy suffered a simultaneous demand and supply shock, with the manufacturing and service sectors severely impacted due to lockdowns, inadequate availability of oxygen and some essential medicines and equipment, migration of workers, and the spread of COVID-19 amongst the workforce. Notwithstanding these challenges, FDI into India during the COVID-19 period has been the highest ever, reaching US\$ 81.72 billion in 2020-21. Our exports for the period April-June 2021 have also shown robust performance. In just the first six months of 2021, we have seen 15 Indian startups reach unicorn status.

The government has signalled its resolve to build a self-reliant India - “Aatmanirbhar Bharat” - for rebuilding, revitalizing and building resilience in the economy, while also engaging the world with greater confidence and competitiveness. The attractiveness of India as an export and investment destination for Singaporean and global investors is expected to further improve due to the significant improvement in the Ease of Doing Business in India. The creation of this conducive business environment has come about due to determined policy measures such as massive modernization of infrastructure at an unprecedented pace, repeal of archaic laws, easier regulatory compliance, labour law reforms, tax reforms and easing of customs procedures.

The implementation of reforms such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, the establishment of a Real Estate Regulatory Authority, rationalisation of Labour Laws, the reduction of Corporate Tax from 30 percent to 22 percent, and the ongoing reforms in the agricultural sector, have laid the foundation for the next phase of growth. Our healthcare system is at the threshold of a transformation as a result of our new Medical Assurance Scheme called ‘Ayushman Bharat’. This is slated to benefit about 500 million people. Global confidence in the Indian growth story has been further cemented by the Government of India’s determination to bring in further structural reforms and the consensus prediction that India’s economy will bounce back to its high growth trajectory this year.

By next year, India will be the largest source of university graduates. By 2030, the average age of India’s workforce will be 32 years. By then, we will have a skilled-labour surplus of nearly 245 million workers, with talent availability in financial services, technology, media, telecommunications and manufacturing. All this has positioned India well for a period of sustained long-term growth.



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This year's budget, presented by India's Finance Minister on 1 February 2021, takes the economic transformation process further down the road. A big push towards growth, through triggering an investment cycle, especially in the areas of infrastructure and asset creation, simultaneously with social sector expenditure aimed at generating equitable growth, was the main theme.

More economic corridors and National Highway works are being planned to augment road infrastructure. The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), which was launched about a year ago with 6,835 projects, has now expanded to 7,400 projects.

The government has allocated nearly \$3 billion for recapitalisation of Public Sector banks. It has also been decided to create a Bad Bank in the form of an Asset Reconstruction and Management Company for stressed assets management to promote a stable financial regime, creating a more conducive environment for foreign investments.

Bold steps such as raising the FDI limit in the insurance sector from 49% to 74% and allowing foreign ownership and control with safeguards would open up the sector in a major way to international players.

Mega Textile Parks are envisaged over the next 3 years, and will create world-class infrastructure with plug-and-play facilities, enabling India's textile industry to become an integral part of global supply chains.

The government has already announced Production-Linked Incentives for 13 priority sectors, with total benefits envisaged at \$30 billion over 5 years, to boost manufacturing in India. The government is also rolling out a data-centre park policy, to incentivise the setting up of data centres in India.

The government has allocated US\$5 billion for the COVID-19 mass vaccination programme, with an assurance for more, if required. Over 500 million doses have been administered, as of today. But we still have a long way to go and the government is looking at a number of ways to boost our vaccination rates further.

### **What are your views on the state of ASEAN-India relations. What are the new initiatives taken in the context of Prime Minister Modi's Act East Policy?**

India and the ASEAN region have enjoyed strong cultural and trade links for over a millennium. South-east Asia is our neighbour by land and sea. The tides of the ocean, the monsoon winds and the force of human aspirations have forged timeless links between India and Southeast Asia. Even colonialism added a new dimension to our connected histories. We enriched each other in the process. In 1992, the relationship was suddenly turbo-charged with a series of policy initiatives, including India's first-ever Comprehensive Economic Cooperative Agreement (with Singapore), several bilateral FTAs, as well as the India-ASEAN FTA that came into



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**“Burgeoning ties with ASEAN, initially described in India as our “Look East” policy, were upgraded to “Act East” a few years ago. This relationship actually reflects a profound shift in India’s geo-political outlook towards the world to its East. Growing contacts and expanding cooperation with South East Asia opened up to India the world beyond it, as India also sought to engage Japan, South Korea and China more seriously. In the years thereafter, as we entered the East Asia Summit process, this particular direction of India’s engagement strengthened even further and extended to Australia and New Zealand, as well as the Pacific Islands. Indeed, without ASEAN, the transformation of the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific would have never happened.”**

force in July 2015. With ASEAN, from dialogue partners, we have become strategic partners over the course of 25 years. We pursue our relations now through annual summits and over 30 dialogue mechanisms.

As a result, ASEAN is today India’s fourth largest trading partner and accounts for more than a tenth of its total trade. In turn, India is ASEAN’s seventh largest trading partner, with bilateral trade at over US\$ 80 billion. Investment flows are also substantial both ways, with ASEAN accounting for approximately 18% of investment flows into India since 2000. Singapore, of course, is the principal hub of both inward and outward investments.

Burgeoning ties with ASEAN, initially described in India as our “Look East” policy, were upgraded to “Act East” a few years ago. This relationship actually reflects a profound shift in India’s geo-political outlook towards the world to its East. Growing contacts and expanding cooperation with South East Asia opened up to India the world beyond it, as India also sought to engage Japan, South Korea and China more seriously. In the years thereafter, as we entered the East Asia Summit process, this particular direction of India’s engagement strengthened even further and extended to Australia and New Zealand, as well as the Pacific Islands. Indeed, without ASEAN, the transformation of the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific would have never happened.

In January 2018, India hosted the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit to celebrate 25 years of Dialogue Partnership, 15 years of Summit Level interaction and 5 years of Strategic Partnership. In an unprecedented gesture, all ten ASEAN Leaders attended the Commemorative Summit and graced the Republic Day celebrations as Chief Guests.

In his Keynote Address at the Shangri La Dialogue in June 2018, Prime Minister Modi pointed out that the ten countries of South East Asia connect the two great oceans in both the geographical

and civilizational sense. Inclusiveness, openness and ASEAN centrality and unity, therefore, lie at the heart of the new Indo-Pacific. India wants to see a strong, unified and prosperous ASEAN playing a central role in the emerging dynamic of the Indo-Pacific, as we believe that an integrated ASEAN is not only a big economic opportunity, but is also vital for peace and stability and the evolution of an open, balanced and inclusive security architecture in the wider region. Defence and security engagement in the Indo Pacific region is an essential and expanding element of India’s strategy in support of that vision.

Our destinies are closely linked not just by challenges but also by opportunities. Forces that will shape the region will affect us equally. As Singapore commences its three-year term as country coordinator for ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations this month, we look forward to working closely together to strengthen the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership.

**India and Singapore have strong cultural links, with an active calendar of cultural events during normal times, as well as a high level of people-to-people engagement reflected in the large number of arrivals of Indian tourists and businessmen. What are the activities planned by the High Commission for celebrating India@75, given that Singapore continues to be under pandemic-related restrictions?**

‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’ is a series of cultural events and digital initiatives undertaken by the Government of India to commemorate the 75th anniversary of India’s independence. It was launched by the Hon’ble Prime Minister on 12 March 2021, exactly 75 weeks before the 75th anniversary, falling on 15 August 2022, and will be celebrated until 15 August 2023.

The Prime Minister launched the celebrations from Sabarmati Ashram from where the Dandi March had begun and said “Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is a tribute by our people to our freedom fight-



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ers and freedom movement. During these celebrations, the country will not only remember all the important milestones during our freedom movement but also gain new energy for development of our future”.

The activities planned by the High Commission will highlight the glorious art and culture of India, its many achievements in the field of science and technology, its rapid strides as an economic powerhouse and celebrate the diversity of its great people who carry India in their hearts wherever they are. We will be partnering extensively with the Indian community for these activities.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place, we were unable to launch India@75 celebrations in the grand manner we had originally planned. We began celebrations in Singapore in March, with the launch of the 6th edition of the Indian Film Festival, in hybrid mode in collaboration with the NUS Alumni Relations Team. We also ran a successful month long special social media campaign celebrating #WomenInIndia and #NariShakti on India's women achievers and organised a Quiz Contest on India's freedom movement among Indian International schools in Singapore. We organized another hybrid mode cultural event in May, in partnership with Global Indian International School (GIIS), Singapore, where we also launched the innovative 'Little Guru' Sanskrit learning App. We organized a week-long celebration of the 7th International Day of Yoga in June, partnering with 56 Yoga studios, professional yoga instructors and organisations from all over Singapore, conducting 209 sessions with the participation of over 22,000 people. We also gifted 110 children's books from India, for the India Corner proposed at the National Library Board of Singapore, with plans for more in the coming months. I am sure these books will help raise awareness about India in the younger generation. Online classes on Gandhian Philosophy were conducted by renowned Gandhian Smt. Shobhana Radhakrishna and three participants from Singapore

were felicitated for their participation and completion of the course. For this Independence Day, we are publishing a Special Supplement India@75 and are working with ZEE TV, Radio Masti 24/7 and Teamworks to bring you different events.

We have a wide variety of events planned for the coming months, including workshops with prominent Indian artists, an art competition themed on India@75 and cultural programmes in partnership with SIFAS and Apsara Arts. But, as you would understand, the format of these events depend on how the pandemic situation plays out and how the social restrictions are progressively relaxed.

**What is your message to Indians and Singaporeans here celebrating the commemoration of 75 years of India's Independence?**

India's journey as an independent nation over the last 75 years has been enriched by the partnership and good wishes of our friends. Connected by history and human bonds, India and Singapore rejoice in each other's successes. Built on our shared values and interests, and our belief in sovereign equality of all nations irrespective of size, our partnership will contribute to a better future for our countries and our world.

As we celebrate the milestone of India@75, we are delighted to share India's joy with the friendly people of Singapore. I also warmly congratulate the Indian community in Singapore, and thank them for their immense contribution to the development and prosperity of both India and Singapore, and their role in strengthening the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

I welcome the Indian community and our Singaporean friends to enthusiastically participate in these celebrations so that we can relish the values and achievements that India has stood for, not just since 1947, but whose foundations were laid several millennia before.



**“As we celebrate the milestone of India@75, we are delighted to share India's joy with the friendly people of Singapore. I also warmly congratulate the Indian community in Singapore, and thank them for their immense contribution to the development and prosperity of both India and Singapore, and their role in strengthening the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.”**

# Amrit Mahotsav: Illuminating India's Extraordinary Evolutionary Odyssey

*As the people of India gear up to celebrate 75 years of Independence the government has launched the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav initiative to commemorate 75 years of progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements*

**T**he odyssey of "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav", officially kicked off on 12th March, 2021, which starts a 75 week countdown to India's 75th anniversary of Independence and will end a year later— on 15th August, 2023.

Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav is an embodiment of all that is progressive about India's socio-cultural, political and economic identity. This Mahotsav, is dedicated to the people of India who have not only been instrumental in bringing the country thus far in its evolutionary journey but also hold within them the power and potential to enable Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of activating India 2.0, fuelled by the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat. On this occasion felicitation of freedom fighters, Armed forces heroes, young achievers; cultural performances, heritage walk, number of competitions, organisation of bicycle rallies and other such programmes are being arranged all over the country.



PM Modi launched the Amrit Mahotsav website worldwide

## A Showcase of India's Development

The last 75 years has seen India grow significantly across all sectors. The Mahotsav will showcase India's accomplishments since 1947. It is aimed at instilling pride in the country's many accomplishments which are richly evident from many sectors which range from space and technology, to health and education.

## Shatabdi Sankalp

The year 2047 will be a watershed moment in India's history; 100 years of India's Independence. "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav" will focus on India's vision, aspiration of India's youth and what India will be in the next 25 years. During this Mahotsav India will strive to take a "Shatabdi Sankalp" which will act as guiding light for India during next 25 years.

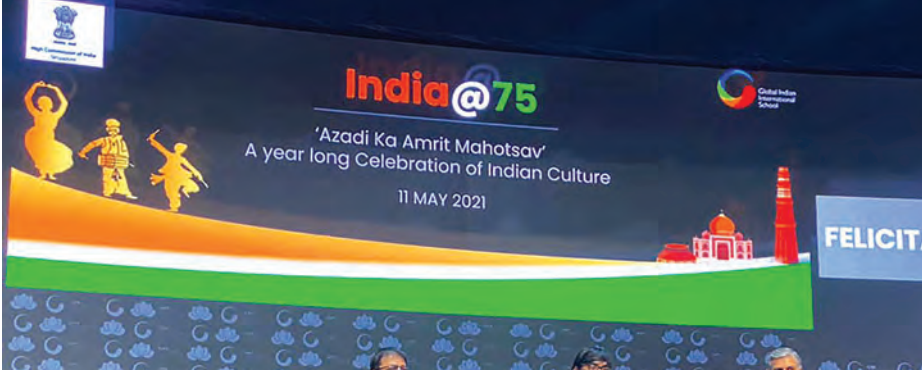
## Event Round UP

A line-up of 75 events in 75 weeks has been dedicated for the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' countdown to 15th August 2022. The host of celebratory and commemorative efforts is aimed to be people-intensive. The various ministries and departments under Government of India have been closely involved in the exercise of conceptualizing events that not only align with the overall focus on nation building but also help people appreciate the ideas of resilience and self-reliance that connect with the

To visit Azadi Amrit Mahotsav go to  
<https://amritmahotsav.nic.in>







Singapore launch of India@75's Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav on 11th May 2021 - a year long celebration of Indian Culture opened by (standing far right) High Commissioner P. Kumaran

Highlights also included Indian cultural performances and the launch of 'Little Guru', world's first Gamified Sanskrit learning app



country's rich cultural heritage and draw inspiration from India's ever expanding role as a global leader.

## Curtain Raiser

On 12th March 2021 Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmedabad, Gujarat, inaugurated 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', the government's initiative to mark 75 years of India's independence. The celebrations will continue till August 15, 2023. On his arrival in the city the Prime Minister paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at Sabarmati Ashram. He also visited Hriday Kunj, the house in the Ashram where Mahatma Gandhi stayed with his wife Kasturba from 1918 to 1930.

PM Modi comments in the Ashram Visitors' Book shared that 'Azadi Ka

Amrit Mahotsav is a tribute by our people to our freedom fighters and freedom movement. During the celebrations the country will not only remember all the important milestones, important times during the freedom movement but also gain new energy for development of our future.' He then went on to address the gathering at the venue of the cultural programme. Earlier, before the launch of the celebrations, he had tweeted: "Today's AmritMahotsav programme begins from Sabarmati Ashram, from where the Dandi March began. The March had a key role in furthering a spirit of pride and Aatmanirbharta among Indias people. Going #VocalForLocal is a wonderful tribute to Bapu and our great freedom fighters" In his tweet he also urged people to: ""Buy any local product and post a picture on social

media using #VocalForLocal. A Charkha will be installed near Magan Niwas at Sabarmati Ashram. It will rotate full circle with each Tweet related to Aatmanirbharta. This shall also become a catalyst for a peoples movement."

The PM flagged off the '241-mile Padyatra' (Freedom March) from Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad to Dandi in Gujarat's Navsari district and inaugurated the curtain raiser activities of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' (India@75). The Prime Minister launched the website of India@75 and also the 'Atmanirbhar Incubator' programme of Ministry of Culture in partnership with Sabarmati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust to preserve the skills and arts of artisans/crafts persons on the verge of extinction.





**“A line-up of 75 of events in 75 weeks has been dedicated for the ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’ countdown to 15th August 2022. The host of celebratory and commemorative efforts is aimed to be people-intensive...”**

A unique Charkha Campaign was also started by the Prime Minister to promote ‘Vocal for Local’. A short film on ‘Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav’ was screened on the occasion and Dandi Yatra Geet was also performed. The occasion was marked by colourful and inspiring cultural performances in the spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat representing cultural variety and diversity from across the country.

The performances ranged from those based on patriotic song penned by famous Tamil poet Subramania Bharti to Vande Mataram by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee to a beautiful cultural item from Kashmir among others.

## DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched the ‘Freedom@75’ programme of the Delhi government as part of commemorating the 75 years of independence of the country through 75 weeks of celebrations by hosting an evening of patriotic songs at Connaught Place’s Central Park. The 75 week-long programmes organised by the city government will highlight Delhi’s role in the freedom movement and its journey in the last 75 years, including the vision of Delhi for 2047, when India will complete its 100 years of Independence.

## MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister, Uddhav Thackeray inaugurated the ‘Amrut Mahotsav’ function at August Kranti Maidan in Mumbai on 12th March 2021. The Chief Minister paid floral tributes at the August Kranti Memorial while remembering freedom fighters at the beginning of the function.

## KERALA

The curtain raiser events of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav were held in Kerala in three historic places in the state - Payyannur in Kannur

district, Mananthavadi in Wayanad district and Kundara in Kollam district. All these three places are of great historical significance for their association with India’s glorious and valiant struggle against the foreign rule.

## LADAKH

As a part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to mark the beginning of the nationwide celebrations of the 75th anniversary of India’s independence, a series of events and activities were held in Kargil with patriotic fervor and zeal. The daylong events started with the inauguration of an Archery exhibition match by the Deputy Commissioner and CEO, LAHDC, Kargil Santosh Sukhadeve along with the Senior Superintendent of Police Kargil Anayat Ali Choudhary at Khree Sultan Chow Sports Stadium Biamathang, Kargil.

## SRINAGAR

In the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, a grand Shikara Rally as part of the celebrations of Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav was held in Dal Lake in Srinagar. The rally was flagged off by the Advisor to Lt Governor, Baseer Ahmed Khan from Kashmir International Convention Centre (KICC) lawns on the banks of Dal Lake which culminated at Nehru Park. As many as 100 Shikaras were part of the rally.

## VARANASI

As part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, a 3-day Shehnai festival was organised at Benaras Hindu University. Sangeet Natak Academy and Faculty of Music & Performing Arts, BHU joined hands to organise this musical evening to remember the shehnai maestro, Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan

## MADHYA PRADESH

The Minister of State for Culture and Tourism, Prahlad Singh Patel presided over the Flag

Satyagraha in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh on 18th June 2021. The programme was organised by the Ministry of Culture and IGNCA as part of ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’ being celebrated to commemorate 75 years of independence of India. The program started with a cultural satyagraha padyatra from Kamaniya Gate in the city to Gandhi Bhawan, the Town Hall complex.

## PUDUCHERRY

Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan planted saplings on the promenade on beach road to mark the launch of a drive to plant 75,000 saplings across the union territory as part of the celebrations. Inaugurated a plantation drive for 75,000 saplings to be planted as part of #AzadiKaAmrutMahotsav. These saplings will remind us of several unsung heroes of the freedom struggle,” she tweeted.

## MANIPUR

The town of Moirang occupies a very important place in India’s freedom movement. On April 14, 1944, Col. Shaukat Ali Malik of the Azad Hind Fauz had marched into Moirang along with his soldiers and hoisted the flag of the Indian National Army (INA). This year NEZCC in collaboration with the Department of Art and Culture, Government of Manipur, observed the occasion on April 13, 2021, as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations.

## ASSAM

On April 2, 2021 the supreme sacrifice of the 140 peasants of the historic Patharughat Peasants’ Uprising was commemorated with a cultural programme called “Patharughat Ki Veer Gatha” at Natya Mandir, in Darrang district in Assam. The event was organized as part of the “Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav” being celebrated to mark 75 years of independence.





# Independence Did Not Come Easy, Value It!

by Deepan  
s/o Arumugam

**The message from Indian National Army (INA) war veteran Maj. Ishwar Lal who had lived through both the India and Singapore periods of independence**

It is no secret, for both India and Singapore to gain independence, from the British Raj there were many sacrifices made by the people at that time. While such stories, are aplenty in the history books, one wonders would there be someone, still around, from those times who would share those stories. We were happy to reach out, through the help of Sree Narayana Mission, to a Singaporean War Veteran Ishwar Lal, who shared his learning and journey.

Now 92, Ishwar Lal is proud to have been a part of the Indian National Army (INA) that was set up in Southeast Asia with Japanese help in 1942. After the British surrendered in February 1942, the Japanese encouraged and even forced soldiers from the defeated British Indian Army to join the INA to liberate India. INA was first led by Captain Mohan Singh, then it was later headed by Subhas Chandra Bose. It was dissolved when the Japanese surrendered in 1945.

Just a mention of those pre-independence days still make Ishwar beam with pride thinking about those early days, when he had played his part during India's Independence. He recalled: "I was 13 when I started working for Rash Behari Bose, who was a revolutionary leader working against British Raj. He was in charge of the INA. He encouraged me and told me he was happy with me and my work". Ishwar is also proud of his name, which was given to him by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, his actual name was Ishwar Singh. "During those times, we were taught to respect our elders. When my father saw me in uniform for the first time, he told me to do my work honestly

and to do my job to the best of my ability. These were the values we were raised with during those times," he said.

At INA he shared, "I was an instructor, responsible for teaching the children to march and sing Indian National Songs. My experience at INS was enjoyable. We had friends from all over, from Ipoh, KL, many other places. India and Singapore were both under the British at that time. We did not know we were making history, we were just doing our job. People those days were very patriotic, they had concerns but had hope and desire to gain independence from the British. We have paid a big price to gain our independence both for India and Singapore, I would like the present generation to remember two things, "Loyalty and give your best to the country. Being in Singapore Army he later used to coach National service men and told them "You're building your own country, you're defending your own country, you're protecting your own country. Singapore is now your own country, do your best". He feels proud to have done his part and says, his life was well lived and has no regrets. Even today, Singapore has an Indian National Army monument located within Esplanade Park, it was erected in 1995 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. Standing at an original site it is dedicated to an unknown soldier from INA – that was destroyed after the war.

## Forgotten Motto

The original monument was built at the Esplanade just before the Japanese surrendered. On 8 July 1945, Bose laid its foundation stone at the



PM Narendra Modi and Defence Minister of India Shri Rajnath Singh had visited the INA Monument at Esplanade Park and paid tribute to the memory and sacrifices of the soldiers

Esplanade. The words inscribed were the motto of the INA: Unity (Etihaad), Faith (Etmad) and Sacrifice (Kurbani). When British forces returned to Singapore that same year, the Head of Southeast Asia Command, Lord Mountbatten, ordered the original Memorial to be demolished.



IN History Pictorial Focus

## India-Singapore Relations- Hallmark of **Close Ties & Cooperation**

**T**he close ties between India and Singapore have a history rooted in strong commercial, cultural and people-to-people ties that go back over a millennium. The more modern relationship is attributed to Sir Stamford Raffles who, in 1819, established a trading station in Singapore on the route of the Straits of Malacca which later became a crown colony and governed from Kolkata till 1867. In 1965 India was one of the first countries to recognize Independent Singapore. Even more recently this robust relationship was elevated to a Strategic Partnership in 2015 during the visit of PM Modi and on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. India-Singapore relations are based on shared values and approaches, economic opportunities and convergence of interests on key issues. Political engagement is regular. Defense relations are particularly strong. Economic and technological ties are extensive and growing. Cultural and human links are very vibrant. There are more than 20 regular bilateral mechanisms, dialogues and exercises between the two nations.



### Visits by Indian Leaders

• In May 1937 Pandit Jawhat lal Nehru made a non-state visit as part of a pan-Malayan tour. In an address to the Indian Chamber of Commerce he urged the local Indian community to be united and pay closer attention to education **1**

• His next visit, again a non-state one, to Singapore was in March 27 1946 amidst preparations of India's Independence from British rule

• In June 1950 Nehru made a State visit to Singapore to lay the foundation of the headquarters of Singapore-Indian Association and the Mahtama Gandhi Memorial Hall

• Earlier in May PM Lee Kuan Yew had led a condolence service here in honour of 'a staunch friend' Mahatma Gandhi who had led India to freedom

• In May 1968 PM Indira Gandhi made a state visit to Singapore

• In September 1971 President VV Giri made a state visit to Singapore **2**

• In September 1994 PM Narsimha Rao made a state visit to Singapore

• In November 2000 President KR Narayanan made a state visit to Singapore where he addressed the Round Table Discussion at the Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies (IDSS)

• In April 2002 PM Vajpayee made an official visit to Singapore to deliver the 21st Singapore Lecture, which was chaired by Dep. PM Lee Hsien Loong.

• On 31 January-3rd February 2006 President Abdul Kalam made an official visit to Singapore to deliver the 27th Singapore Lecture **3**



# COVER STORY- INDIA-SINGAPORE IN HISTORY



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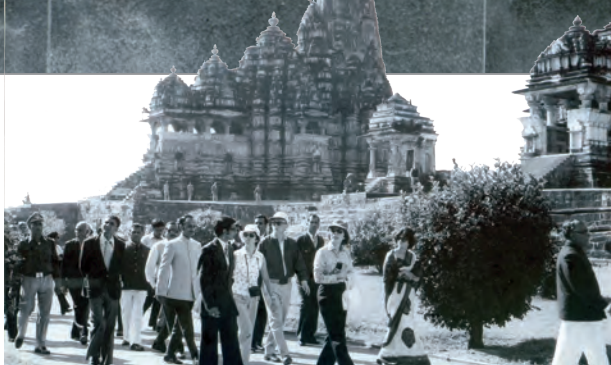
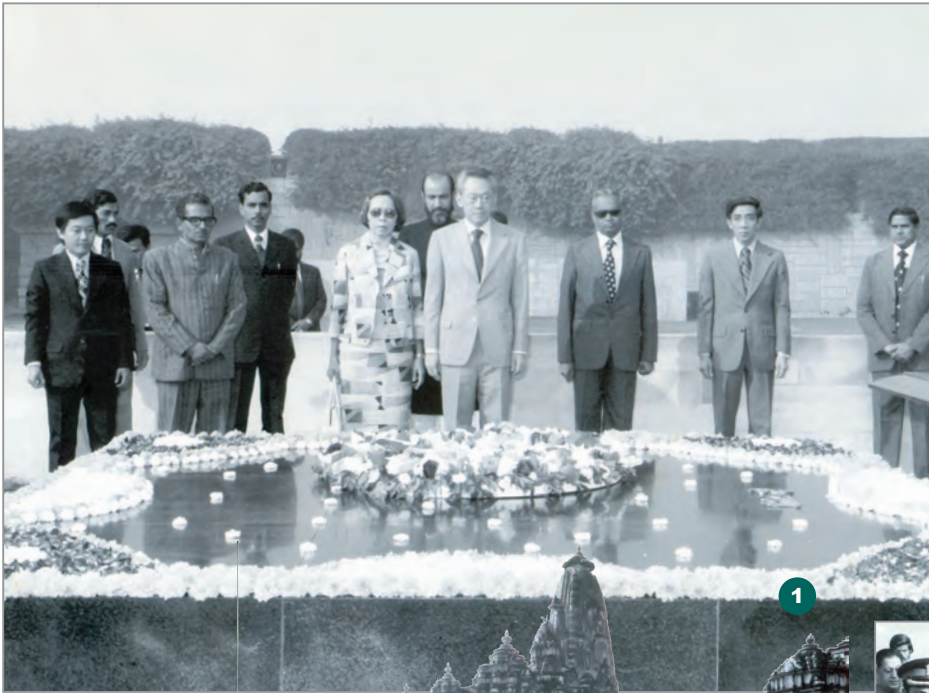
- In 2007 PM Manmohan Singh made an official visit to Singapore to attend the 6th India-ASEAN Summit and the 3rd East Asia Summit
- In 2011 he again made a state visit in which he unveiled the bust and commemorative marker of Jawahar Lal Nehru with ESG Goh Chok Tong
- On 29 March 2015 PM Modi visited Singapore to attend the funeral of Singapore's first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew

- PM Modi paid an official visit on 23-24 November 2015 where nine bilateral documents were concluded and a Joint Statement was issued. He delivered the 37th Singapore Lecture titled 'India's Singapore Story' 4
- PM Modi became the first Indian PM to deliver keynote address at the annual Shangri La Dialogue on 1 June 2018. He outlined India's vision of the Indo-Pacific region and reflected India's commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region 5

- When PM Modi visited Singapore in November 2018 to participate in the multilateral ASEAN-India RCEP and East Asia Summits, he also became the first Head of Government to deliver the keynote address at the Singapore Fintech Festival, world's largest Fintech event 6
- On 24 November 2018 The President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind transited through Singapore on his way back from Australia



# COVER STORY - INDIA-SINGAPORE IN HISTORY



## Visits by Singapore Leaders

• In 1966, in the month of September Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew made a State visit to India and attended a civic reception at the historic Red Fort. This was followed up by official visits in again in 1970 and 1971 and 1978 **1 3**

• In 1980 Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew made a State visit to India to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting (CHOGRM)

• PM Lee was back in November 1983 to attend the CHOGRM held in New Delhi again

• PM Lee's last official visit in India was in March 1988

• In January 1994 PM Goh Chok Tong was the official invitee for the Republic Day Parade in India as Chief Guest. He laid the foundation of International Tech Park in Bangalore and discussions on bilateral agreements on Avoidance of Double Taxation, Shipping and Tourism **2**

• This was followed by a visit to Kolkata to attend the Centenary Celebrations of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on 6 January 1995

• The Singapore PM paid another visit in January 2003 to conclude bilateral agreements on Avoidance of Double Taxation, Shipping and Tourism. again in 1995, 2000

• In January 2003, President Nathan was the first ever Singaporean president to pay a State visit to India **4**



# COVER STORY- INDIA-SINGAPORE IN HISTORY

75  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav



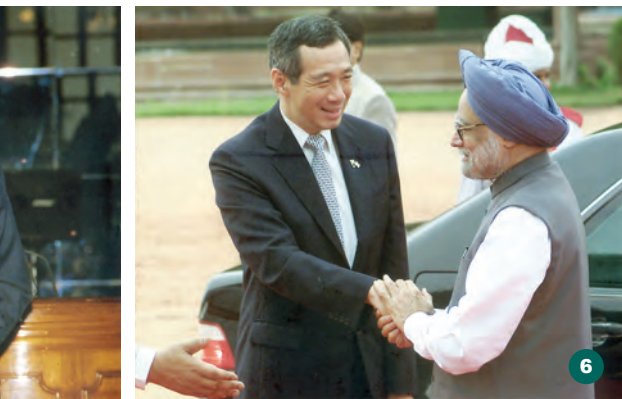
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• On 9 July 2004 Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong was conferred the Jawahar Lal Nehru Award for International Understanding **5**

• In June 2005 Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong officially visited India and again in 2012, when several MOUs on renewal of bilateral agreements were signed **6**

• In December 2012 Prime Minister Lee was officially in India to attend the Indo-ASEAN Commemorative Summit

• In 2015 President Tony Tan Keng Yam visited India for the celebration of the 50 years of India-Singapore diplomatic ties from 8 to 11 February **7**

• In October 2016 Prime Minister Lee was on a three-day working visit to India where MoUs on cooperation in intellectual property, in skill development and in setting up a skill centre in Assam were signed during the visit **8**

• In January 2018 PM Lee visited New Delhi to participate as the Chief Guest at 69th Republic Day Parade Celebrations and to co-chair the ASEAN Indian Commemorative Summit held to mark the culmination of the 25th Anniversary celebrations of India-ASEAN Dialogue Partnership **9** **10**



## INDIA-SINGAPORE **BILATERAL BUZZ**

*Keeping the conversations going between India and Singapore, despite the constraints of distancing in these pandemic times, continues to yield excellent engagement in many areas*

### India and Singapore Reaffirm Strong Relations During COVID-19 Pandemic 1st May 2021

Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan had a telephone call with Minister of External Affairs of India Dr S Jaishankar on 1 May 2021. They reaffirmed the strong relations between Singapore and India, and the mutual commitment to support each

other at the two countries' respective times of need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Minister Jaishankar thanked Minister Balakrishnan for Singapore's contribution of oxygen cylinders to India on 28 April 2021, as well as for the facilitation of the transfer of

cryogenic tanks from Singapore to India. Minister Balakrishnan assured Minister Jaishankar that Singapore will continue to support India in its fight against COVID-19.



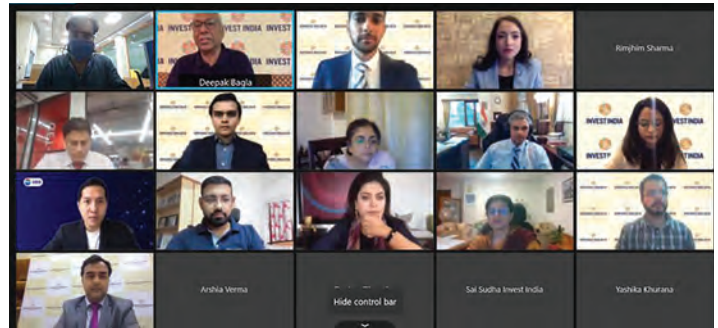
### Contemporary Challenges Call for Even Stronger Partnerships 30th June 2021

Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar met Singapore Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan in Matera, Italy on the sidelines of the G-20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 30 June. Describing Singaporean

Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan as his "friend", Minister Jaishankar said he had a warm meeting with him. "Contemporary challenges call for an even stronger partnership. Committed to exploring new opportunities and setting higher goals," he tweeted.

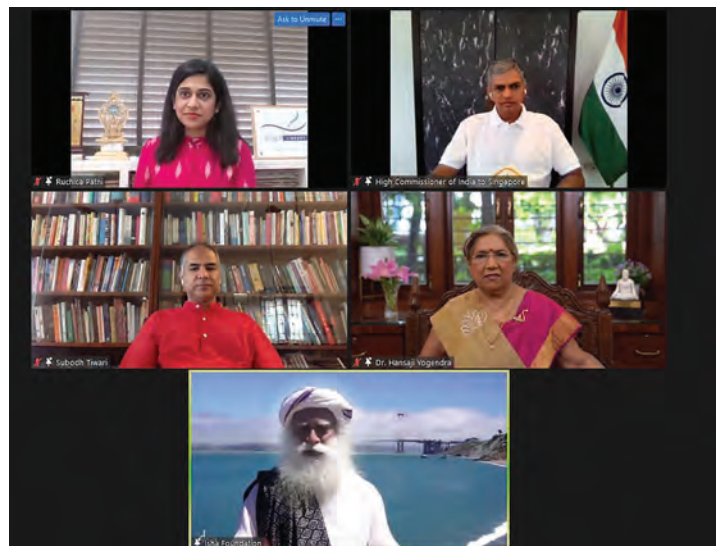
### Bilateral Dialogue on Digital Banking 27th July 2021

Invest India, in collaboration with the High Commission of India here hosted the premier bilateral dialogue on digital banking/neobanking to share best practices and learning experiences from the industry. The online event witnessed participation from government organisations such as NITI Aayog and Monetary Authority of Singapore and industry members including RazorpayX, DBS Bank, Sea Group and Sequoia India.



### Webinar on Yoga 19th June 2021

Cultural Cooperation, an ongoing process involves performing arts, theatre, museum exchanges, art, languages, and youth exchanges. Recently a well-attended webinar was organized on yoga to celebrate the 7th International Yoga Day. The panelists on the Webinar on Yoga for Covid Anxiety and Mental Health, on June 19, as part of the 7th International Day of Yoga 2021, set up a very lively session which was much appreciated. It was a very engaging experience with the keen participation of High Commissioner of India, Singapore Isha Foundation Yoga Library, Sadhguru, Dr Hansaji Yogendra who is Director of the Yoga Institute, Shri Subodh Tiwari who is the CEO of the Kaivalyadhama Yoga Institute.







## Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong Inaugurates Sikh Shrine 6th July 2021

The inauguration of Silat Road Sikh Temple by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, on 3 July, after a prolonged renovation during the pandemic, is a reminder of how the gurdwaras rallied the Sikh community to help those in need during this difficult period, regardless of race, religion or background. To address the disruption created by the pandemic for devotees the

Coordinating Council of Sikh Institutions commissioned a task force called 'Project Akaal' to provide support for mental health within the Sikh community. The Silat Road shrine is not just a place of worship, but a shining icon in the multi-religious and multi-racial landscape of Singapore.

## Condolences for Former President Pranab Mukherjee 2nd September 2020

Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan signed the condolence book at the Indian High Commission on the passing of the former Indian President Pranab Mukherjee. Dr Balakrishnan said Mr Mukherjee had a long and illustrious political career and will be remembered as a visionary who worked tirelessly to advance India's development and was a good friend to Singapore.



## Embassy Row - Ministerial Pow Wows



High Commissioner of India to Singapore P Kumaran had an introductory call with Mr Desmond Lee, Minister for National Development and Minister-in-charge of Social Service Integration on 15 April. Fruitful outcomes were expected based on the discussions that focused on India-Singapore



relations and possible areas of further cooperation.

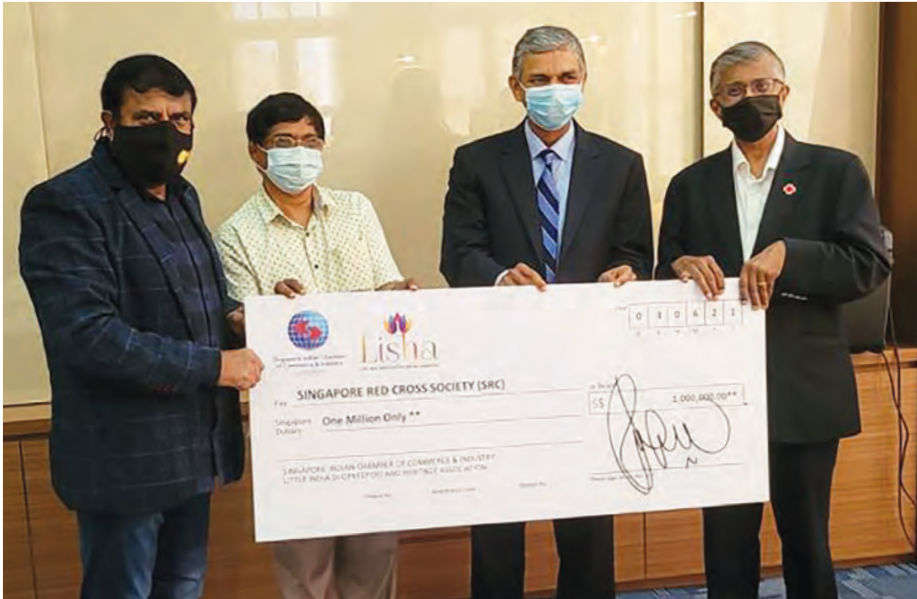
High Commissioner of India, Singapore Kumaran Periasamy made an introductory call on- with Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Health on 20th April.



Minister of State Shri V Muraleedharan had an engaging discussion with Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ms. Sim Ann on 17th June. Views were exchanged on areas of common interest and reaffirmed commitment to further strengthen India-Singapore Strategic Partnership. MoS also took the opportunity to thank Singapore for its unstinting support to India during the pandemic.

# Singapore Steps Up for India COVID Relief Fund

*Amongst the first to reach out to India with aid was Singapore, which has had centuries old ties with the country and is home to a large Indian diaspora*



(From l to r): Dr T Chandroo (Chairman, SICCI), Mr Rajkumar Chandra (Advisor, LISHA), H.E Mr P Kumaran (Indian High Commissioner to Singapore), Mr Benjamin Williams (Sec-Gen, Singapore Red Cross)

The COVID-pandemic has created havoc in India with far reaching socio-economic effect. The worst of it was felt during the recent second wave on the Indian health care system which saw scenes of searing distress in homes and hospitals, with shortage of beds, doctors, medicines — and worst of all, even oxygen.

In Singapore various associations, suppliers and even individuals came forward with practical measures in response to this unprecedented situation. Donations have come pouring in as well from several corporates, suppliers, organizations and individuals who wished to support the humanitarian effort in India. They have managed to raise more that S\$1,000,000 through this initiative within just over a month.

### SICCI Extends A Hand

The Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCCI) donated 50,000 SGD to the **India Covid Relief Fund** with the backing of the Singapore-Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

(SICCI) and Little India Shopkeepers Association (LISHA) to support India in its fight against COVID-19.

In deep gratitude of this support SICCI's Chairman, Dr T Chandroo said: "We want to thank Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCCI) for their steadfast response to India's unprecedented crises and commitment to help India cushion the impact of the second wave. We are greatly indebted to the Chinese business community who are standing together with us heart-to-heart to help India in this time of dire need."

Joining him was Mr Roland Ng, President, SCCCI who shared that, "Over the decades, we have established strong rapport and collaborations with SICCI, our valuable counterpart in the ethnic Chamber network. Covid is a global pandemic which we shall fight and overcome together. Thus, we stand in solidarity together in this noble initiative undertaken by our fellow associations SICCI and LISHA to address challenges in India. We believe this humanitarian relief will play a part in helping India overcome this crisis."

### Unprecedented Crisis

Mr C. Sankaranathan, Chairman LISHA, said: "The plight of India is deeply saddening. We want to thank everyone who has pitched in to make a difference in the unprecedented crisis that India is facing."

Secretary-General and CEO, Singapore Red Cross, Mr Benjamin Williams, said, "The widespread casualties resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic throughout India is indeed heartbreaking. The

priority now is to get urgently needed medical supplies to hospitals and other medical institutions in India.

Donations from the public, including from SCCCI, SICCI and LISHA, will be used to purchase oxygen supplies including oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators and ventilators. It is heartwarming to see people and organisations from all walks of life supporting this effort to help communities affected by the pandemic in India. We hope that these donations will go some way towards helping India overcome its public health emergency."

India's High Commissioner, H.E Mr P. Kumaran, was present at the cheque presentation event to Singapore Red Cross (SRC) on June 3, 2021.

### Suppliers Extend Aid

Several suppliers came forward to extend their helping hand to the "India Covid Relief Fund".

This is what Ms Helena Ma, Managing Director of IDEA Communication Pte Ltd has to say about this great humanitarian effort of the suppliers who came forward in these dire times: "This detrimental wave of Delta variant has cost many innocent lives of our families, friends, brothers and sisters in India. Yet it's heartening to see people from all over the world uniting to fight the battle as one. I feel hugely humbled and honoured to be able to work with good organisations such as SICCI and Singapore Red Cross and on the aggregation and distribution of thousands of oxygen concentrators to cities and rural villages in India as part of the India COVID-19 relief effort. I'm optimistic about the goodness in people and believe that



# BILATERAL TIES - PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE LINKS

Photo: www.redcross.sg



in due time we will be telling the story of how we win the fight of COVID-19 as one humanity. We thank these suppliers and companies, along with Smart- Gas Pte. Ltd, Lumiere32 Pte. Ltd and Arna International Pte Ltd for their generous, timely support in coordinating supplies."

## Med Asia (I) Pte. Ltd.

Under the steerage of Director Ms Asmita and CFO, Mr Krish, Med Asia (I) Pte Ltd, facilitated supplies from donations worth S\$500,000 in the form of ventilators, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Kits, ventilator masks and Oxygen concentrators to India's government hospitals and Covid Centres.

## Mayura HealthHub Pte Ltd

CMO Mr George C. Tan, said "We are a distributor of quality Covid-19 medical equipment, and we worked with Chinese manufacturers and charity organizations in the US, Singapore and India to procure oxygen concentrators and arranged for shipments to India at low prices. Everyone has chipped in to help, these charity organizations and SICCI had done the most work - my team is honored that we can contribute in whatever little way we could."

## Corporate Support

### Baring Private Equity Asia

Corporate donors like Baring Private Equity Asia not only contributed cash but critical medical supplies as well. As shared by Mr Jimmy Mahtani, Managing Director, Baring Private Equity Asia Pte Ltd : "The rising number of COVID cases and fatalities in India has been heart wrenching, and the team at BPEA want to support the country during this difficult time. In this regard we are proud to support the SICCI COVID relief drive, providing critically important life-saving

medical equipment, medicines and materials, in conjunction with the SRC and Temasek Foundation, to help those in need."

## GOPIO Singapore & TLCS

SICCI received two cheques from GOPIO (Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin), Singapore, and Tamil Language and Cultural Society (TLCS). Mr. Harikrishnan who represented both organisations as their President handed over the cheques to the tune of \$10,000 to Dr Chandroo on 2 June, 2021. SICCI expressed its heartfelt thanks to both of these organisations for their magnanimous support towards the India Covid Relief Fund.

## Coastal Energy Pte. Ltd

Mr Ahmed Buhari, CEO of Coastal Energy Pte. Ltd delivered 200 Oxyrgen Flowmeters and other medical equipment to the Government of Tamil Nadu. Coastal Energy is a member of SICCI and hosts the United Economic Forum Chamber of Commerce (UEFCC) in Singapore.

## Private Individuals Reach Out

Mdm Nee K. Menaga Subramaniam recently donated her late husband's wheelchair to Sree Narayana Mission, and S\$7,000 out of her lifesavings when she heard about the "India Covid Relief Fund". She was the oldest recipient of the Herculean Doyenne award, in a ceremony organised by LISHA's Women Wing in 2018. She was involved in nursing from 1957-1996 and believes that it allowed her to live a life full of satisfaction. She met more than 100 patients a day which gave her a lot of peace of mind and motivated her to serve humanity in whatever way she could.

## COVID-19 Relief Donors

Adani Group

Binance Charity

Dhanishta Foundations

Executive Ship Management

GAIL Limited

Global Indian International School

IIM Alumini Association

IIT Alumini Association

Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)

ITC Limited

Little India Shopkeepers & Heritage Association (LISHA)

Olam International Pte Ltd

Physio Asia Therapy Centre

Reliance Industries Ltd

Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SICCI)

Tata Group

Transworld Group

# BILATERAL TIES - PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE LINKS

## India's Second Wave of COVID-19 Adds Greater Impetus to Singapore Relief Activities



### Expanding Use and Networks for Medical Oxygen

As the rising numbers of fresh cases and the number of deaths continued to cause serious concern the Indian government kicked in an aggressive exercise to bring the situation back under control, including expanding the use of medical oxygen, strengthening oxygen transport networks, increasing the availability of medical and paramedical personnel and providing greater focus to districts of concern.

Indian-owned companies in Singapore, such as IOCL, GAIL, ITC, TATA Group, Adani, Reliance, Transworld Group and Executive Ship Management have been at the forefront in procuring equipment to the relief supplies by air and sea.

The first and second tranche of cryogenic oxygen containers were delivered on 24 and 27 April as a part of the procurement agreement between Tata Group and Linde Gas (India) Pvt Limited. The third tranche of cryogenic oxygen containers was sent on 29th April, the fourth tranche of cryogenic oxygen containers was sent a day later. There was active coordination between the High Commission of India here and multiple agencies in Singapore to facilitate transfer.

In April Temasek sent oxygen concentrators, non-invasive BiPAP ventilator machines and other essential medical supplies to local communities in urgent need in partnership with Air India and Amazon India News. This first batch went to Mumbai.

### Singapore's Relief Efforts Lauded

Minister in the Prime Minister Office and 2nd Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Maliki Osman and High Commissioner of India, Kumaran Periasamy, Singapore flagged off a consignment of 256 refillable 47 on 28th April (see picture above) to support India's COVID-19 efforts. High Commissioner Kumaran Periasamy conveyed his appreciation for Singapore's relief efforts and contributions to bring humanitarian relief to India in this time of need. He said: "We would like to thank Singapore for supporting us at a time like this through the availability of supply chains, linking Singapore and helping us source items. we also would like to thank the various Ministries concerned the ministry of trade and industry, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence and other Agencies such as Tamasek foundation and the Singapore Red Cross for supporting us in the times of need and would like to which time all very good health and safety in these very challenging pandemic time." External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India during a phone call, too thanked Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan for the support and facilitation provided on oxygen related equipment supply.

Relief material comprising 3650 oxygen cylinders of varying capacities was shipped out from Singapore on May 5. The consignment was the result of efforts and contributions from IIT Alumni Association,

Singapore; Singapore India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), Adani Global, Wilhelmsen Ships Services, Dupont Sustainable Solutions, Global Indian International School, Singapore, DBS Bank, SEA Group, Wilmar International and Galaxy Container Service Pte Ltd.

In May Olam International, headquartered in Singapore, partnered with Temasek, Temasek Foundation, Singapore Airlines, SATS (Singapore Airport Terminal Services Ltd), Air India, Kerry Logistics, the Pan IIM Alumni Association and the High Commission of India in Singapore to source and airlift essential medical equipment to meet critical oxygen needs in India.

High Commissioner of India, Singapore Kumaran Periasamy appreciated the efforts of SUMO in supporting India's fight against the pandemic. Singapore university mission oxygen SUMO is an admirable initiative by alumni of Singapore's leading universities to send oxygen concentrators to India. SUMO was instrumental in bringing together the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and Singapore Management University for making the best of their reach and expertise in procurement of essential relief assistance.

### Indian Diaspora

High Commissioner Kumaran was also able to activate the large Indian community in Singapore, particularly the IIT, IIM alumni and TiE Singapore, as well as organizations like the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Little India Shop Owners Association to help raise funds and assist in procuring medical support and facilitating logistics. Box ends...

On 17 May emergency relief supplies procured from Singapore included 18 ISO Cryogenic oxygen tanks (15 filled; 3 Empty); 2750 empty Oxygen cylinders (40 Lt and 10 L capacity), 200 filled cylinders (40 l), 36 BiPaps and some other medical equipment. These were a result of procurements arising out of commercial agreements as well as donations by companies and organizations like IOCL, GAIL, FICCI, CII, Red Cross Society India, Pan IIM Association, Govt of Tamil Nadu and others.

High Commissioner Kumaran, on June 3, attended the handing over of a cheque of 1 million dollars raised by the efforts of Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) and the Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association (Lisha) to the Singapore Red Cross (SRC).



## Vande Bharat Mission A Bubble Pact Agenda



**Scheduled international passenger services have been suspended in India since March 23, 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic. Special international flights have been operating under the Vande Bharat Mission since May 2020 and under bilateral “air bubble” arrangements with selected countries since July 2020**

It must have been a big surprise for UAE-based Indian businessman S. P. Singh Oberoi to find he had the whole plane to himself when he boarded Air India's flight from Amritsar to Dubai. India suspended its scheduled international flights on March 23, 2020, when the first wave struck the country.

The Vande Bharat Mission started on 6 May 2020 to help foreigners in India return home and help Indian nationals head back. As of 5 July 2021, over 9 million stranded people have been brought in or flown back to their country through international Vande Bharat flights.

In May 2020, a day after the launch of the Vande Bharat Mission, India's national carrier, Air India's first repatriation flight that took off from Singapore carrying over 234 stranded Indian nationals and landed at the Delhi Airport around 11.45 am. According to data from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, a total of 3,829,600 passengers have been flown on Air India Vande Bharat Mission 2.0: on a total of almost 30,000 flights till August 2, 2021.

The Vande Bharat Mission started in early May 2020 to evacuate Indians stranded

abroad due to coronavirus-induced travel restrictions. Air India and its low-cost arm Air India Express have been among the largest carriers during this period in terms of the number of flights they've operated and total repatriated passengers. Scheduled flights operate from Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Pune, Amritsar, and several other cities with international airports.

### Air Bubble Pacts

Special international flights have been operating under Vande Bharat Mission since May 2020 and under air bubble pacts formed with around 28 countries including Afghanistan, Bahrain, Canada, France, Germany, Iraq, Japan, the Maldives, Nigeria, Qatar, Kenya, Bhutan and France the UAE, the UK and the USA

Under an air bubble pact between two countries, special international flights can be operated by

their airlines between their territories. Under this, limited flights can be operated between the two countries, but with pandemic precautions in place. Flight bookings for Mission Vande Bharat are available for Indian nationals who have completed their mandatory registration with the Embassy of India.

From May last year to May 18, 629 Vande Bharat flights have ferried 87,055 passengers from Singapore. On an average 180 Indians are flying back daily to India as part of the Vande Bharat Mission flights, Channel News Asia reported. "There is an average of about 180 departing passengers



First chartered flight under Vande Bharat Mission to India on 18th June 2020 landed in Hyderabad with 146 passengers



# BILATERAL TIES - PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE LINKS

**From May last year to 18th May 2021, 629 Vande Bharat flights have ferried 87,055 passengers from Singapore. On an average 180 Indians are flying back daily to India as part of the Vande Bharat Mission flights.**

- Channel News Asia

**“There is an average of about 180 departing passengers on these flights back to India and about 25 arrivals to Singapore each day”**

- Transport, Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Manpower Ministries.

on these flights back to India and about 25 arrivals to Singapore each day,” according to a statement issued by the Transport, Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Manpower Ministries. Among the reasons the Indians had to return home were job loss, family compulsion and death in family due to COVID -19 pandemic that has impacted the entire world since last year.

Air India Express has recently announced flights between India and Malaysia for the month of July 2021. Operated under ‘Vande Bharat Mission’ to bring back

stranded Indians in foreign lands the airlines will operate a total of 64 flights which will connect Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to India’s Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kochi, Trichy and Vijayawada.

The airline has been part of the Vande Bharat Mission, the largest civilian evacuation exercise in the world undertaken by the Government of India in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak last year. Air India Express alone operated 7005 VBM flights carrying a total of 1.63 million passengers till May 2021.

## AIR INDIA - King of Hearts by Nomita Dhar

*What happened when the airline industry came to a standstill? One airline that kept hope alive for Indians around the world was its national carrier, Air India, through its Vande Bharat Mission flights*

When I was growing up, Air India to me always reminded me of the Maharaja —“the King”.

For me Air India did live up to its adage ‘heart of a king’ in every way, during the Covid -19 pandemic, when I travelled twice to India for emergencies.

While the airline industry came to a standstill, one airline that kept hope alive for Indians around the world was its national carrier, Air India, through its Vande Bharat Mission flights.

During the crisis it continued to fly on selected routes and sectors and bringing people home. Those who had lost their jobs, others who had lost loved ones and many others who had lost all hope, Air India, with its caring staff kept on serving with grace.

From Singapore Vande Bharat flights steadfastly continued to operate throughout the pandemic across different states. In the first phase bookings were done through the High Commission of India; subsequently besides the forms and other formalities, passengers were able to book directly online - this made it so much easier for passengers who were already undergoing so much stress.

I travelled when my father was critically in September 2020 and then again this year in 2021 March when my father-in-law passed away. Had it not been for Air India Vande Bharat flights provided by the Government of India, I would not have been able to spend this precious time with them. For this, I will be eternally grateful.

Most certainly I would call it the airline with a heart.







## Of Space, IT Giants & Unicorns

**India is on a roll as it reaches forward to capitalize on its growing attraction as an investment destination for technology transactions**

India's spanking new Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy 2020, aims to promote science more effectively and experts driven. The introduction also of various funding policies now empower the nation to improve its key strategic industries, including space, energy, and the life sciences. Today the country now ranks third in terms of the most attractive investment destinations for technology transactions globally. According to the Global Innovation Index (2020), India ranks 48th overall in terms of innovation and ranks amongst the top 15 nations in Information and Communication Technology and R&D-intensive global companies.

India has a strong network of science and technology institutions and trained manpower. It has the third-largest scientific and technical manpower in the world. In total 1,494 Indians were listed among the top 2% scientists in world. India's biggest IT giants include Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Wipro and HCL Technologies.

### SPACE

India's journey in space began in 1962, just 15 years after gaining independence from the British. Over the course of time it has achieved feats uncommon among nations, including developing two indigenous launch systems and building satellite constellations for a variety of applications. The Indian space economy is currently worth \$7 billion — but the country is looking to grow that to \$50 billion. To do so it needs a flourishing commercial space sector— this is where some dramatic changes are already taking place.

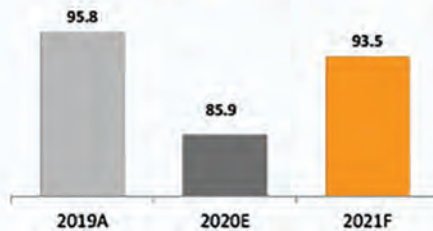
The country is entering a new era in its long history in space. In a historic decision, the Union government approved private sector participation in the entire range of space activities. "This will unlock India's potential in the space sector," said Union Minister Jitendra Singh, as he announced this transformative decision. The Cabinet approved the newly formed Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe), which will act as an arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation

## IBEF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY ANALYSIS



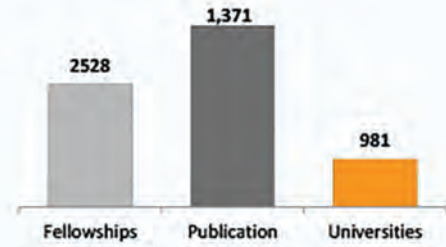
### MARKET SIZE

R&D Spending In India (US\$ billion)



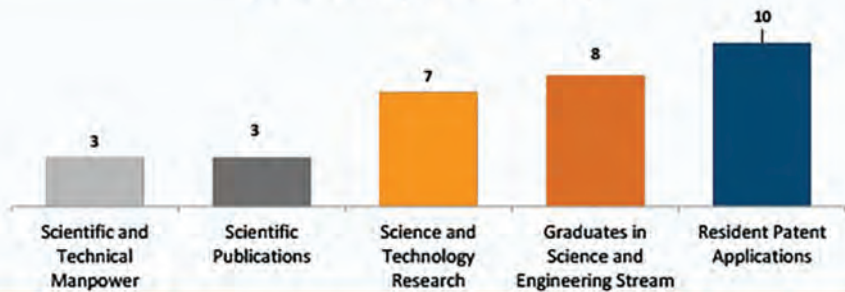
Note: F – Forecast; A – Actual

As of FY 20–21



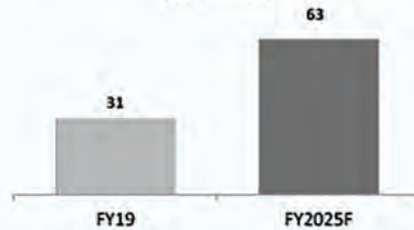
### SECTOR COMPOSITION

Global Rank (as of FY 18–19)

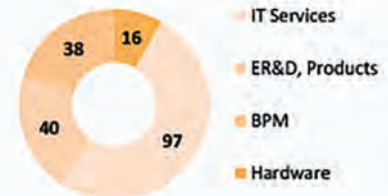


### KEY TRENDS

Engineering R&D and product development (US\$ billion)



Indian Technology Revenue FY20 (US\$ billion)



### GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Indian Institutes of Information Technology Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020

Scientific Infrastructure Building September 2020

CSIR technologies for rural development



### ADVANTAGE INDIA

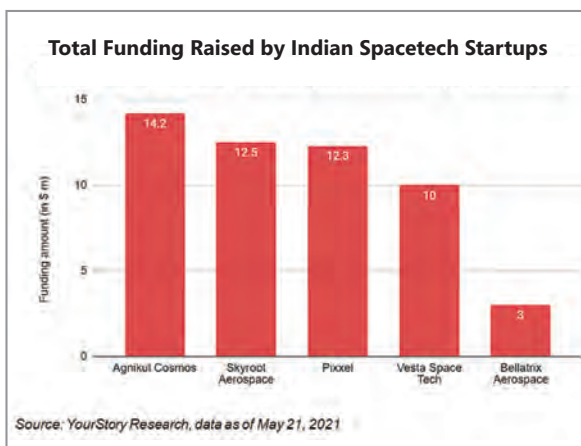
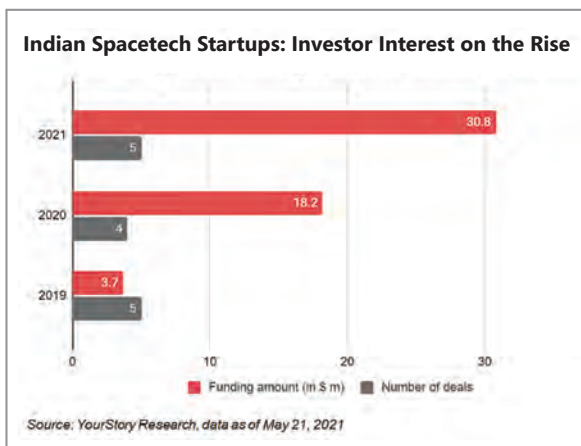
- **Robust demand:** India's gross expenditure on R&D (GERD) has been consistently increasing over the years. As per the Economic Survey 2021, India's GERD as a percentage of GDP stood at 0.65%. Expanding middle-class and increasing affordability are demand drivers for technologically advanced products.
- **Rising Private Activity:** Establishment of CoEs in various areas. NMITLI initiative on PPP basis.
- **Policy support:** In February 2021, production linked incentive scheme for IT Hardware was approved to boost domestic manufacturing of IT Hardware.
- **Attractive opportunities:** India is the top exporter of IT products, has the third largest pharma sector and a fast-growing contract research segment.





**“India has many advantages in space tech. Indian companies will spend less both in terms of manufacturing and operating costs as compared to US companies; we have an enormous talent pool of engineers that we can tap into and the VC eco system is warming up.”**

- Mr Awais Ahmed, CEO Pixxel



(ISRO). IN-SPACe, which will be functional in six months, will provide “a level playing field” to private companies in the country’s space programmes, said the minister. Through policies and good regulatory practices, IN-SPACe, in consultation with ISRO, will also guide and promote the private companies in their endeavours in space activities after assessing their needs and demands. Private players are also allowed to use ISRO’s infrastructure, scientific and technical resources, and even data for their space programmes. Till now there was limited participation from private industries in India’s space sector—and that was mainly confined to the manufacturing and fabrication of rockets and satellites.

Spacetechn startups in India are ready to take off, driven by a more conducive government policy, local tech expertise and increasing investor interest. Helmed by young founders

startups such as Pixxel, Bellatrix Aerospace, Agnikul, Vesta Space, to name a few, have raised funds amid the pandemic, as they identify unique opportunities in space that can solve problems across industries. The new reforms announced by the government include a level playing field for private companies in satellites, launches and space-based services by introducing a predictable policy and regulatory environment to private players and providing access to geospatial data and facilities of ISRO.

As shared by Arpit Agarwal, principal at Blume Ventures, in a media report: “The space tech startups in India are extremely good and can launch a rocket at one third the cost as compared to US in the same segment.” Investors such as Blume Ventures, StartupXCeed and Inflexor Ventures, who have backed space startups, believe that the time for space tech is ripe now, driven by tailwinds that include the proliferation of micro-satellites, reduced launch costs, and the need for more real-time deep intelligence on earth.

As Awais Ahmed, CEO Pixxel sees it: “India has many advantages in space tech. Indian companies will spend less both in terms of manufacturing and operating costs as compared to US companies; we have an enormous talent pool of engineers that we can tap into and the VC eco system is warming up.” Pixxel has raised \$5 million in seed funding in August. Yashas Karanam co-founder and COO at Bellatrix opines that this is the best time to do a space tech startup, because the government and ISRO have opened up the space sector. Earlier there was no legal framework to launch a satellite or rocket, neither was the ISRO facility open for private companies.

## PHARMACEUTICALS

India’s pharmaceutical sector has been thrown into the limelight through the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. Many who were unaware of what a pivotal role it plays in India’s health eco-system should know that it supplies over 50% of global demand for various vaccines, 40% of generic demand in the US and 25% of all medicine in the UK. As a matter of fact, India is the world’s largest provider of generic drugs and the pandemic has surely added lustre to its growth plans - as there has been a global movement to combat not just Corona and its related variants, which appear to be burgeoning by the day. Over 80% of the

# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

## ADVANTAGE INDIA

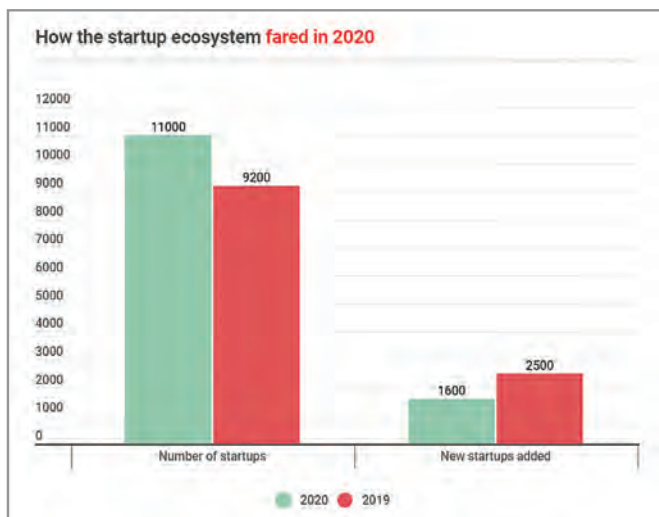
Robust Demand	Attractive Opportunities	Policy Support	Rising Private Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As per the Economic Survey 2021, India's GERD as a percentage of GDP stood at 0.65%.</li> <li>Expanding middle-class and increasing affordability are demand drivers for technologically advanced products.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>India is the top exporter of IT products, has the third-largest pharma sector and a fast-growing contract research segment.</li> <li>India stands third globally in the number of peer-reviewed Science and Engineering Publications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indian Institutes of Information Technology Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020, was introduced to provide knowledge in the IT field.</li> <li>In February 2021, production linked incentive scheme for IT Hardware was approved to boost domestic manufacturing of IT Hardware.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of CoEs in various areas. NMITLI initiative on PPP basis.</li> <li>Increased investment by private players. Setting up R&amp;D centres.</li> </ul>

world's requirement for antiretroviral drugs to combat AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is supported by India's pharma industry.

India's domestic pharmaceutical market is estimated at US\$ 42 billion in 2021 and likely to reach US\$65 billion by 2024 and further expand to reach US\$120 - 130 billion by 2030. India's biotechnology industry has been valued at US\$64 billion in 2019 and is expected to reach US\$150 billion by 2025. India's drugs and pharmaceuticals exports stood at US\$ 24.44 billion in FY21.

## UNICORNS RIDE

Transformative winds sweeping across India have seen the rapid adoption of smartphones in recent years, explosive growth of inexpensive internet services and a new generation of ambitious entrepreneurs. Driving the start-up and unicorn scenario is India's changing reforms and policies towards startups and various government initiatives "The Indian tech start-up base is witnessing a steady growth at a scale of 8-10 per cent year-on-year growth. COVID-19 has accelerated digital adoption and the shift to online in the country. This has created new opportunities for tech start-ups that are capitalising on this opportunity," as reported by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom), India's technology industry trade body.



### TOP INDIAN IT FIRMS

**Tata Consultancy Services** ranks amongst the most valuable IT services brands worldwide. The company offers services like mobile apps, Internet of Things, Blockchain, Cloud Solutions, Enterprise Apps, Automation and AI, and many more. Bangalore based **Wipro** is a market leading IT, consulting and business process services company. It utilizes the power of analytics, robotics, cloud and other emerging technologies to help clients spread across six different continents to adapt to the current digital trend. **Tech Mahindra** defines the connected world, providing innovative and customer-centric information technology experiences. **HData Systems** is a software and data science firm which helps businesses enhance their productivity and performance with analytical processes. The company delivers app development, data science, big data analytics, AI, custom software development, machine learning, automation, etc. The 50 year+ **Capgemini India Pvt Ltd** is one of the leading multinational corporations that delivers IT consulting, custom software development, professional and outsourcing services.

According to the 'COVID-19 and the Antifragility of Indian Start-up Ecosystem', reports which were jointly released by TiE Delhi and Zinnov, India's number of unicorns is expected to rise to 100 by 2025. TiE Global, of which TiE Delhi is a chapter, is a nonprofit venture devoted to entrepreneurs in all industries, at all stages, from incubation, throughout the entrepreneurial life cycle. Zinnov is a global management consulting and strategy advisory firm that works with clients to generate value through custom frameworks, data and insights, and tailored customer-centric strategies.

India has added 1,600 new tech start-ups and a record 12 unicorns in 2020, according to Nasscom's annual start-up report. It's strange but true that despite the depressing economic outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has sped up the process of the adoption of online technologies in India, perhaps even more than in other countries. Despite being a pandemic year,





**“The surge of funding and the breeding of unicorns is not a surprise because India has the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world and the third-largest market for such startups.”**

- Mr Pranav Pai, Managing Partner 3one4 Capital Advisors LLP

2020 did one better than 2019 when just over 1,300 new start-ups and seven unicorns were added.

A Credit Suisse Group AG report found there are about 100 unicorns in India with a combined market value of \$240 billion, in sectors from e-commerce and fintech to education, logistics and food-delivery. India’s corporate landscape is undergoing a radical change due to a remarkable confluence of changes in the funding, regulatory and business environment in the country over the past two decades,” the report said. “An unprecedented pace of new-company formation and innovation in a variety of sectors has meant a surge in the number of highly-valued, as-yet unlisted companies.”

According to Pranav Pai, managing partner at 3one4 Capital Advisors LLP: “The surge of funding and the breeding of unicorns is not a surprise because India has the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world and the third-largest market for such startups.” As observed by Debjani Ghosh, President,

Nasscom: “The continued innovation, right decision-making and strong investor commitment have positioned the Indian start-up ecosystem as a key contributor in accelerating India’s digital economic growth.”

Executives, who picked up invaluable experience at leading startups such as Flipkart and Paytm, are said to now be venturing into setting up their own companies – and entrepreneurs who have had successful exits are turning to their second or third startups. Global investors such as Japan’s SoftBank Group Corp. and South Africa’s Naspers Ltd. see growing opportunity in the country’s startup scene. The Fintech industry has seen the maximum number of unicorns. However, SaaS, data analytics, retail tech and gaming sectors are catching up fast. Tech companies and startups focused on AI have managed to navigate troubled waters with ease judging from the AIMResearch report, which reveals that AI startups in India attracted a total of \$836.3 million in funding in 2020 — the largest in seven years with 9.7 percent year-on-year growth.



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# NSE-SGX Connect: Bourses Collaborate for Level Playing Field



# NSE



**Mr Farhat Khan, then First Secretary (Economic) in the High Commission of India in Singapore describes how both countries in the course of their long standing economic engagement in various sectors are moving forward with a more collaborative mood and positive approach in the new order set in place globally by the pandemic**

**T**rade, investments, innovation, fintech and startups have come to occupy an increasingly important space in the India-Singapore bilateral economic engagement. On the technological front, the pandemic has telescoped the future into the present, against the backdrop of global geopolitical tensions and uncertainties created by dynamic headwinds against globalisation. These developments underline the need for countries to continue to collaborate for the consolidation of a rules-based, transparent and fair economic order. This also places an imperative on private and commercial entities to contribute towards the larger global good.

### Fortunate Legacy

India and Singapore enjoy a fortunate legacy of being connected through a

historical route which allows them to start their new journeys from a position of mutual trust and respect. These feelings entrenched at a political and diplomatic level percolate down to the civil society and private sector as well. Where there is inherent trust, as the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India says, calamity can be turned into opportunity.

### Common Benefit

A recent example where two systemically important institutions have set aside their differences and chosen to tread a path based on common benefit and larger good, is the recent connect between the **Singapore Exchange (SGX)** and the **National Stock Exchange (NSE)** of India.

There existed a robust trade of India equity futures indexed to the well-known



**“Our collaboration with SGX is an important step towards fulfilling the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat as envisaged by our Honourable Prime Minister of India with GIFT IFSC playing a much larger role in the global financial markets. The connect will broaden the international and domestic participant base and further strengthen the capital market ecosystem in GIFT city resulting in more broad based development across asset classes and capital raising activity. I wish to thank the Government of India, SEBI, IFSC Regulatory Authority, GIFT City administrative authorities and the government and regulatory authorities in Singapore for their guidance and support.”**

- Mr Vikram Limaye, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of NSE





home market benchmark "NIFTY". A commercial difference arose between the two exchanges which then spiralled into a dispute and dragged them into arbitration.

The situation looked complicated for a while, with prospects of both sides having their commercial interests eroded over the period of arbitration. Fortunately, opportunity beckoned, as that was also the time the Government of India was making its push for the International **Financial Services Center (IFSC)** at the **Gujarat International Financial Tech-City (GIFT)**. It only required political and diplomatic trust to seal the opportunity. And seal we did.

Both sides agreed to relegate the litigation to the backseat and bring a new collaborative effort to the fore. That effort

resulted in the creation of a NSE IFSC-SGX connect at the IFSC. The two entities recently completed finalisation of the key terms for operationalising the Connect. This would result in bringing together international and GIFT City participants to create a bigger liquidity pool for Nifty products in GIFT City. The icing on the cake is that both NSE and SGX have withdrawn the arbitration proceedings.

For IFSC, this is a key development and a golden opportunity for the integration of GIFT City ecosystem with international financial markets. Apart from broadening the international and domestic participant base across asset classes and enhancing investments and capital market flows between India and the world, this Connect would also demonstrate the creation of a connectivity infra-

structure that would incorporate international best practices.

The timing also coincides with the formation of the **International Financial Services Center Authority** at GIFT City, the first international financial services centre in India. The IFSCA would be a unified authority for the development and regulation of financial products, services and financial institutions at international financial services centres in India. Prior to the establishment of the IFSCA, the domestic financial regulators, namely RBI, SEBI, PFRDA and IRDAI regulated the business in IFSC.

### GIFT's Vision

GIFT's vision is to be a leading financial centre connected to the major global markets with primary focus on India's economic development. It plans to develop itself into a well-diversified and globally competitive financial hub for international banking, insurance, capital market and asset management activities.

Apart from this vision, GIFT City will also bring many firsts to India. It will be the first greenfield smart city with state-of-the-art infrastructure – a utility tunnel, an automatic waste-collection system, district cooling system, potable water from any tap throughout the city and dual power supply at power station with building level backup power facility. It will host not only international banking, insurance/reinsurance and capital markets, but also an international bullion exchange, aircraft leasing and financing activities, alternate investment funds, global in-house centres, international logistics park, maritime and fintech clusters as well.

*Following are statements issued by the leaders of both bourses on the NSE-SGX Connect*

**"Building connectivity across international platforms in Singapore and India will facilitate unfettered access for global market participants, and in turn enhance investments and capital market flows between India and the world. As Asia's pioneering central counterparty, SGX will work with NSE and stakeholders to develop a connectivity infrastructure that incorporates international best practices and creates new value for existing and new customers. We deeply appreciate the continued support provided by the government and regulatory authorities in India and Singapore. We look forward to broadening participation and deepening liquidity in NIFTY products for international participants, as part of the growth of GIFT City."**



- Mr Loh Boon Chye, Chief Executive Officer of SGX



# #NewJammuKashmir

## New Milestones in Development



(Above): Power plant using renewable solar energy with sunset over the Gap in the Himalayan Mountain, Kashmir

(Below): India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the highest ever budget for expenditure envisaged for J&K



In March 2020 the Centre presented a budget of Rs1 lakh crore for the newly-created Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) for 2020-21, apart from a separate expenditure plan of Rs 55,317.81 crore for the last five months of the current fiscal. "This is the highest ever budget envisaged for J&K. Total budget for the fiscal is Rs 1,01,428 crore, of which developmental expenditure is of Rs 38,764 crore, an increase of 27 per cent," said the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The capital expenditure was pegged at Rs23, 910.95 crore and revenue expenditure at Rs31,406.86 crore. Tourism infrastructure worth Rs1,000 crores

is also to be taken up under the Prime Minister's Development Programme, adding that for rural development Rs 5,284 crore has been allocated for 2020-21. Rs 2,392 crore is allocation for school and higher education sector and Rs2000 crore allocated for filling up of 50,000 vacant posts. Allocation of Rs 1,268 crore has been made for health and medical education.

### Industry - Changing Narratives

As reported by India's Press Information Bureau (PIB) the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the proposal for the Central Sector Scheme for Industrial Development of J&K. The aim is to take industrial development to the block level in Union Territory of J &K,



**Government initiatives have given greater impetus to the holistic developments in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and empowerment of its populace over the past two years**



which is the first time in any Industrial Incentive Scheme of the Government of India and attempts for a more sustained and balanced industrial growth in the entire UT.

### **Reorganisation of J&K**

In the light of the historic development of reorganization of J&K with effect from 31st October 2019 into the UT of Jammu & Kashmir, under the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, the present scheme is being implemented with the vision that industry and service-led development of J&K needs will bring about radical transformation in its existing industrial ecosystem with emphasis on job creation, skill development and sustainable development (see accompanying box story), by attracting new investment

and nurturing the existing ones — thus enabling J&K to compete nationally with other leading industrially developed States/UTs of the country.

Beneficiaries of the scheme will be both smaller and larger industrial units. The financial outlay is Rs 28,400 crore for the scheme period 2020-21 to 2036-37 (17 years). It is anticipated that the proposed scheme is likely to attract unprecedented investment and give direct and indirect employment to about 4.5 lakh persons. Additionally, because of the working capital interest subvention the scheme is likely to give indirect support to about 35,000 persons. It is expected to lead to equitable, balanced and sustainable socio-economic development of the region.

### **Solar Panels Among Saffron Fields**

In April this year plans were announced for India's first solar "agro-photovoltaic" power project where a solar project will be built on 250-acre (about 100 hectare) field that will also be used to grow saffron. According to an online report by The Print (*theprint.in*) the project is estimated to cost Rs 50 crore. Situated in Pampore which is famous for its high quality saffron, the solar-saffron farm is expected to produce saffron worth an estimated Rs 55 lakh annually. The J&K Power Development Corp. is in talks with the Solar Energy Corp. of India to set up the plant. The Solar Energy Corp. is a central public sector undertaking under the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.





**“We are putting the spotlight on manufacturing, services, technology, innovation, and diversification in agriculture. Our focus is more on re-skilling and up-skilling of youth to meet the challenges of emerging market and become successful entrepreneurs.”**

- Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir Manoj Sinha

## Other Initiatives

The **‘Ayushman Bharat - SEHAT’** scheme was launched to extend health insurance coverage to all residents of J&K. The Union Cabinet has also approved a special package worth Rs 520 crore in the UTs of J&K and Ladakh for a period of five years under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM)**.

The interventions of various developmental schemes executed under the **Prime Minister Development Package (PMDP)** have focused on individual beneficiaries and giving the much-needed life blood to long-pending projects that have been on the backburner in various sectors, by doing away with several obstacles that were in the way. When allocating a huge package of Rs 800 billion to the state government for initiating various development projects in 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modii had expressed his “heartfelt desire” that the J&K government would utilize this grant for the welfare of the Kashmiris and convert J&K into a modern, prosperous and progressive place.

The introduction of the **New Education Policy** is aimed at bringing in a holistic approach in the education system for all-round development. Continuous reform is the key to transformation. The appropriate and timely action on different sectors with meticulous plans to meet the challenges will decide the future, stated the Lieutenant Governor of J&K Manoj Sinha.

## Power to Youth

While expanding on the new dawn of developmental change in J&K, the UT’s Lt Governor Manoj Sinha also spoke of the government’s focus on providing job opportunities to 80 percent of the young population over the next five years and making it possible for them to be an engine of growth for the overall socio-economic transformation of the UT.

Schemes like **‘Mission Youth’** and **‘Mumkin’**— are zeroing in on livelihood generation, education, skill development, career counselling and financial assistance to the youth.

The government envisages that the youth population of the UT will come to inscribe a distinct role in the landscape of the socio-economic and political development of their communities. This empowerment can come from education and livelihood options that support the development of relevant skills and capacity for them to constructively contribute to not just

their communities but also to Kashmiri society as a whole.

Civically engaged and active youth can be important and positive agents of change according to the Lt Governor who also shared that: “We are putting the spotlight on manufacturing, services, technology, innovation, and diversification in agriculture. Our focus is more on re-skilling and up-skilling of youth to meet the challenges of emerging market and become successful entrepreneurs.”

Kashmiri youth is definitely advantaging on the changing culture being witnessed in terms of rising new opportunities and engagement—and an inclusive and empowered status, for them to take wing. There is a spurt in bloggers, V loggers, YouTubers, Instagram and Facebook voices with 1000’s of followers, hailing from J&K, who are now leading the way, listening to a different drummer, as they reach out to the world in the true spirit of entrepreneurship. Pivoting towards the

## EMPOWERING YOUTHS



Examples of Kashmiri youths of today empowered through education and opportunities to express themselves. (Above from l to r): ● Students Rahul Dabi and Sakra Riaz of DPS Budgam received fully funded scholarships for their undergrad studies from Georgetown University in Washington DC. ● Youtuber BAKUS aka Sadat Bhat, with over 150 Lac followers, captures on video Kashmir at its best. (Photo: Hindustan Times). ● Kashmir’s first Ladishah performer, Areej Syed Safvi, a 25-year-old sociology undergraduate from Srinagar. For hundreds of years, Kashmir’s Ladishah, a form of folk genre, was dominated by men, Areej has emerged and caught the imagination of youths and now her YouTube channel has over 24,000 followers





path of peace, prosperity and socio-economic growth its reenergized youth is heralding a new architecture in the UT's holistic and sustainable growth as a modern Jammu & Kashmir - defined by the narratives of today's ecosystem of a hyper-connected world.

## Economic Development Highlights

Lt Governor Sinha shared that under the guidance of Prime Minister Modi, J&K has got a new **Industrial Development Scheme (IDS)** of Rs 28,400 crore. "When this scheme was launched earlier this year, our estimate was to attract Rs 20,000 - 25,000 crores. But seeing the interest and enthusiasm of investors, it seems that this figure could reach around Rs 50,000 crores. Similarly, the estimate of employment generation under the New Industrial Development scheme would also get doubled," he added.

The scheme will focus significantly on the utilization of local resources and

strengths generating employment to over 450,000 people, providing a major support to local industry besides creation of new business opportunities.

"Besides setting up Industrial estates, IT Towers, Logistics Parks, Cold Chain, Medicity, Edu-city etc, the Industrial Policy also focuses on taking industrial growth to the Block level," he said while inaugurating the **IIM Jammu's Online Orientation Program**.

The government has also decided to put an end to the tradition of rotating the seat of the government between Jammu and Kashmir that has been going on for 150 years. With the aim of saving around Rs 200 crores with **Darbar Move**, the government has embraced an e-office completely.

In J&K now the sectors like tourism, film tourism, horticulture, and post-harvest management, agro and food processing, mulberry production for silk, health and



(Top row from l to r): Development projects:  
 • Upgrading of Srinagar's Jhelum riverfront.  
 • Development of historical Mughal Road, which connects Kashmir Valley with border town of Poonch, through Shopian district.  
 • World's highest railway bridge over Chenab River under construction. It is part of Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla railway line project in J&K  
 (Above): • 63 major development projects worth Rs 80,068 underway in J&K, Ladakh

pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, IT & IT-enabled services, renewable energy, infrastructure and real estate, handloom and handicraft, and education offer great growth opportunity to all the stakeholders.



## Record Infrastructure Projects

For Jammu & Kashmir's infrastructure a record 3,300 km of rural roads were constructed under several schemes in 2020-21, hence offering safe and secure all-weather connectivity to remote areas across the union territory. Kashmir has received six new bridges in the border areas costing a total of Rs 43 crores. The **Banihal-Qazigund** tunnel built in the south region of

Kashmir connects Jammu with Srinagar, reducing the distance by 16kms. It is an 8.5km long tunnel built at the cost of Rs 2,100 crores. Work on the 6.5-km **Z-Morh Tunnel**, part of a strategic project for ensuring round-the-year connectivity between Kashmir valley and Ladakh region, is almost complete.

The world's longest highway tunnel, at 9.02 km the **Atal Tunnel** from Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh connects Manali to the remote Lahaul-Spiti valley even in the long winters. Built at an altitude of 10,000 feet through some of the most difficult terrain of Pir Panjal ranges the all-weather tunnel is a boon to the people of Himachal Pradesh, J&K and the UT of Leh and Ladakh as it will minimize the road travel distances. The

tunnel reduces the distance between Manali and Leh by 46 km and saves four hours of travel. The route will stay open even during winter when heavy snowfall blocks the Rohtang Pass.

Another important long-distance road link in the offing is the connectivity between Srinagar and Leh, with the upcoming **Zojila Tunnel**. With this travel between Srinagar and Leh will now only take 7 hours. The new tunnel will ensure all-weather, all-year round connectivity between the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh. The 14.15 km Zojila Tunnel is set to be Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel connecting Srinagar, Dras, Kargil and Leh via the famous Zojila Pass, which is normally closed for six months in a year.

## Pushing the Envelope: Kashmiri Women Entrepreneurs Show the Way



Arifa Jan receives Nari Shakti Puraskar 2019 from President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 7th March 2021.

Kashmir is seeing a new generation of young women entrepreneurs who have been quick to capitalise on emerging business opportunities. From food to fashion, these entrepreneurs have found an ally in social media, which is helping them expand faster than ever before. At least 15,000 female entrepreneurs are pushing the limits to engage in and add to the public discourse actively and inspire the younger generation.

Arifa Jan, the owner of Wonderful Kashmir Crafts, has embarked on reviving the fading art of Numdha, a traditional handmade rug. Awarded by President Ram Nath Kovind, Arifa is the first Kashmiri woman to be nominated for the Women Entrepreneurship Program by the US State Department.



Sisters Iqra and Bushra Mukhtar are reviving traditional dresses and embroidery through their start-up Kashmiri Pehnavu.

Sana Imtiaz Hussaini (22) is the first woman baker from Srinagar to make it to The Homebakers' 2020 list of the top 100 home bakers of the country. Sisters Iqra Mukhtar (27) and Bushra Mukhtar (23) started the clothing line 'Kashmiri Pehnavu' in 2018 to preserve traditional Kashmiri attire by giving it a modern twist.

Uzma Bhat sources prints and patterns from local vendors, and converts the raw fabric into hijabs and dresses which she sells online by using the internet as a digital storefront. Gazalla Amin, an agricultural entrepreneur, manages the aromatic oil business. Over the last six years, she has been restoring Kashmir's rich history via her agribusiness. Owner of Kashmir Essences, Nusrat Jahan Ara (38), saw the Valley's untapped floral market opportunities and became the Valley's first lady floriculture businesswoman.

## Srinagar's New Café Culture



Tourists at the Igloo Cafe located in a ski resort in Gulmarg, Kashmir, January 28, 2021.

Opened by hotels and young Kashmiri entrepreneurs Srinagar's quirky cafes are the new hotspots for gatherings of students, writers, poets, artists and travellers.

### Igloo Cafe, Kolahoi Green Heights Hotel, Gulmarg.

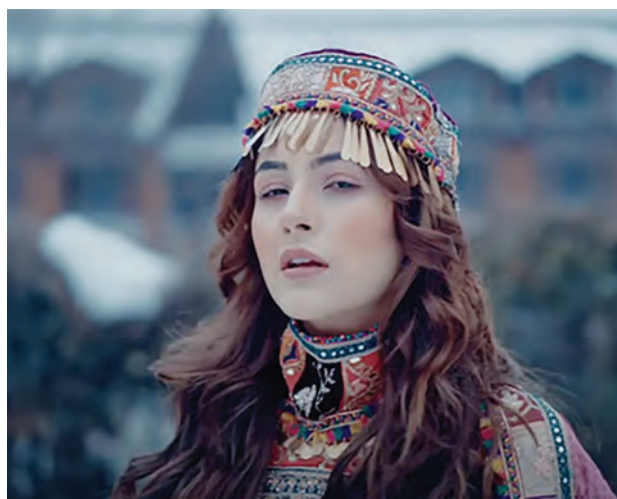
An exciting attraction that has been added to Gulmarg is an Igloo café which has also quickly become the selfie point in town. The tables and seats at the café are built with hard ice and covered with thick rugs. The all-white curved walls are carved with patterns to add a textured look to the whole decor.

### Cafe Liberty

Husband-wife duo Haya and Khawar Jamsheed opened their dream café - a small cosy place for people to come in, relax and enjoy. Tastefully decorated with vintage artefacts, the café is visited by crème-de-la-crème

## Kashmir and Bollywood: Never Ending Romance

Film crews are back in the Valley to resume shooting for web series and music videos. In a bid to revive Valley's music industry, its youth now churn out music videos and post them on online platforms, which has resulted in them receiving collaborations from Bollywood. Music composer Salim Merchant shot his upcoming song 'Tumhe dekh ke' in Kashmir and worked only with the local technicians from Kashmir. Popular Bollywood singer Richa Sharma and model-actor Prince Narula and Yuvika Chaudhary shot a Sufi music video titled 'Mere Ali Maula Ali' in Kashmir. She said "I mostly sing Sufi songs and Kashmir is a place of saints



Shehnaaz Gill in a still from Fly.

and Sufism. I believe that my genre of music suits this place unlike other genres."

A Punjabi production house has shot three music videos in Kashmir with singers Ranjit Bawa, Miel, and A Kay, featuring Bigg Boss notable actor Mahira Sharma. Shehnaaz Gill-Badshah's song Fly and Shaheer Sheikh, Hina Khan's music video 'Barish ban jaana' were both shot in Kashmir recently.





(Above l to r): The Winterfell Cafe. Actor Manoj Bajpayee at Haya Wakil's Cafe Liberty.

of Srinagar as well as Bollywood given its warm feel, interesting menu and beautiful décor.

### Winterfell Cafe

Inspired by the popular television show Game of Thrones and, Winterfell Cafe,

with its waterfront setting at Dal Lake, is one of the most popular cafes in Srinagar today. Brainchild of Kamran Nisar, its brightly-painted interiors have a medieval-era brick and wood theme; the artwork is all GOT-related and there is even a mock 'Iron Throne'.

## Kashmiri Cuisine, Crafts and Culture

### Kanz & Muhul

A tribute to the timeless Kashmiri cuisine and culture staying true to the ancestral approach Kanz & Muhul creates hand-crafted products in small batches with care. Recognised as one of the leading online spice markets in India Kanz & Muhul (also known as K&M) is the brainchild of Matamaal Restaurant which is renowned for introducing Kashmiri Pandit cuisine in the country. "The most iconic thing about visiting our 100-year old ancestral home was a huge stone mortar and pestle (kanz and muhul) that sat silently in a corner of the lawn, witnessing celebration and sorrow alike over the years." reminisces Hans Sadhu, CEO Kanz & Muhul, fondly.



Traditionally the eldest lady of the household would hand-pick the best possible red chilies from Maharajganj, in downtown Srinagar and sun-dry them to make them crisp. Soon, the ladies of the house and the neighbourhood would get together to remove the stem and the seeds from the chilies and the garden would become a chattering ground as they

gathered together sipping on sheer chai (pink tea) and biting into a freshly baked telvuru (Kashmiri bagel-like bread). The ladies would then, turn by turn, pound the chilies and sieve the ground spices to separate the coarser from the finer particles. These spices were really special and would last for a long, long time.

Shipped worldwide through kanzandmuhul.com the wide range of products are also available Amazon, Flipkart, Tata Cliq luxury and at the retail store at Matamaal Restaurant, Gurgaon.



Srinagar - summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir

### Kashmir: A Sublime Tourist Experience

From vaccinating 80% stakeholders to creating elaborate guidelines for hotels, Kashmir's Department of Tourism has chalked out a meticulous plan to receive tourists again. "We are working on two fronts for safe and secure means of reviving tourism, as the pandemic level is likely to dip further. First, special vaccination drives for all stakeholders involved with the tourism industry. Two, capacity building on protocols to handle tourists and ensure their safety during their stay in Kashmir," said Ahsan-ul-Haq Chisthi, Deputy Director, Tourism Department.

Around 75% tourism stakeholders, including shikarawalas, houseboat owners and hotel staff around the Dal lake, have been vaccinated. Similar vaccination drives were also conducted in the tourist hotspots of Pahalgam and Gulmarg. From introducing new Standard Operating Procedures for hotels, such as ensuring well ventilated and airy spaces, new guidelines for the staff and restaurants, contact-less check-ins and barcode access to menus, making RTPCR test mandatory, the Tourism Department, in conjunction with the Health Department and Travel Agents Association of Kashmir, is trying to make travel to Kashmir safe.

The tourism department has also ramped up tourist attractions to entice tourists from all around the world. Located in the foothills of the famous **Zabarwan Range** over 30 acres, Asia's largest tulip garden was opened recently, which attracted over 4,000 visitors in a single day. The administration has recently undertaken

*Continued next page...*



# SPECIAL FEATURE - **KASHMIR** SNAPSHOTS

**“Gulmarg used to be a winter tourism destination and after snowfall, footfall to the ski resort would drop considerably. But due to *Khelo India* (national sports promotion programme), Gulmarg is again emerging as a favourite tourism destination”**

- GN Itoo Director of Tourism Kashmir



(Top & above): Gulmarg - the third highest ski resort in the world

...continued from previous page.

the work to revamp **Kokernag**. This falls under the Prime Minister Development Project at the estimated cost of 3.5 crores Indian rupees. The region located in the Anantnag district of J&K is getting a major upgrade in terms of infrastructure with the building of huts, cafes, resorts, and felicitation centers for tourists.

### **Ski Adventures in the Lap of the Himalayas**

The glistening slopes of **Pir Panjal** are a popular choice for skiing down snow-clad mountains. Standing at an elevation of around 3590 m, the alpine resort of **Gulmarg** is the third-highest ski resort in

the world. Its **Apharwat Peak** (4390m) offers the longest and most majestic ski run in the continent. Gulmarg also attracts snowboarding enthusiasts and is the most inexpensive place to learn to ski.

As the Valley's famed ski resort of Gulmarg is sold out, Director of Tourism Kashmir, GN Itoo said packed hotels in Gulmarg is a positive development. "Gulmarg used to be a winter tourism destination and after snowfall, footfall to the ski resort would drop considerably. But due to *Khelo India* (national sports promotion programme), Gulmarg is again emerging as a favourite tourism destination," he said.



## Tulip Festival-Srinagar

Spring in the Valley heralds narratives of rebirth and hope as the earth spills over with blossoms and fragrances that set hearts alight with an effervescent joi de vivre after a long hard winter. The colours of spring are the very essence of the views that greet you at the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar at the almost week-long annual Tulip Festival in the month of April. Amongst the largest gardens in Asia the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden, formerly the Siraj Bagh, offers grandstand views of the iconic Dal Lake from its setting in the foothills of the Zabarwan mountain range. Featuring over 60 varieties of tulips the garden also features other flower species such as iris, daffodils, hyacinths, roses etc. The Tulip Festival also offers an opportunity to enjoy local musical performances and the crafts and cuisine culture of Kashmir.



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## IDY 2021

### Yoga

# 'A Ray of Hope' During COVID Times

*High Commission of India continues annual celebrations of the seventh International Day of Yoga in Singapore despite challenges posed by the pandemic*

**T**he restrictions thrown up by Coronavirus did not stop the Indian High Commission in Singapore to organise and launch many online activities and virtual programmes to mark International Day of Yoga (IDY 2021).

High Commissioner P. Kumaran officially launched IDY 2021 here on 1st June 2021 and several of the highlights include the India@75 webinar on the topic of *Yoga for COVID Anxiety and Mental Health* brought by some of the leading and oldest Yoga institutions of India on 19th June 2021. On the same day there was also an online Quiz specially for IDY 2021.

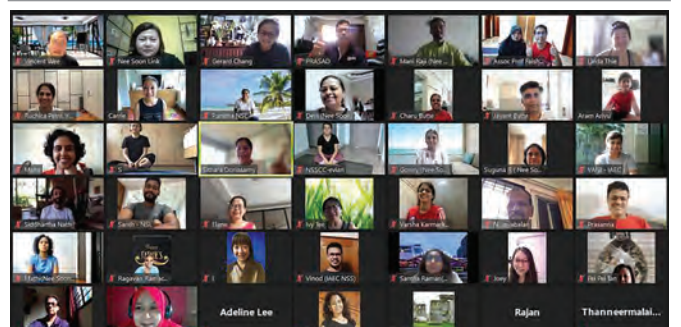
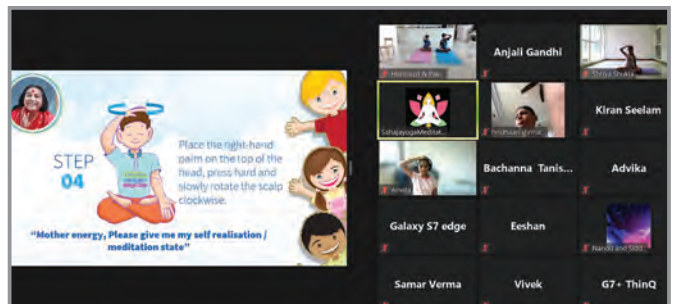
The health and wellness theme that Yoga promotes was also reiterated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Yoga Day message. He said the ancient Indian discipline remains a "ray of hope" and a source of strength for the people in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. He also announced that in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), the world is going to get the power of the 'M-Yoga' app (application), which will have many videos of yoga training based on Common Yoga Protocol available in different languages. PM Modi hoped the M-yoga app will help in spreading the practice of yoga the world over.



(Main photos top & inset and above): IDY 2021 was officially launched by High Commissioner P. Kumaran at the High Commission grounds on 1st June 2021. Wonderful support from many organisations and individuals who recognise the health benefits of yoga (from top right clockwise): ● Webinar on Yoga for COVID



# HEALTH & WELLNESS



Anxiety and Mental Health 19th June with recorded message from Sadhgurus - founder of the Isha Foundation. Sunlove Day Activity Centre. Mavikas Kendra children session of Bharamari. Members of Hindi Society. Nee Soon Community Club. (inset) Foreign workers in their dormitory



# NUS Anniversary Lecture Revisits Indian Artefacts

by Dr Priya M. Jaradi



### Honouring the Artefact Donation from the Government of India to the University of Malaya Art Museum in 1959

**N**estled in the National University of Singapore's (NUS) lush Kent Ridge campus, far from the bustle of the downtown museum district, is the eponymous National University of Singapore Museum (NUS Museum). The museum was originally founded in 1955 as the University of Malaya Art Museum at the university's old Bukit Timah campus. Today, it stands in the company of the stately University Cultural Centre, the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, and the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum. I like to imagine this north-western corner of the campus to be the University's cultural quarter, though it has not been officially designated as such.

While the Museum's close links with pedagogy have always been apparent, its commitment to long-term research remains less visible. This article is an attempt to journey the reader through the Museum's most recent research project, i.e., the Anniversary Lecture (2021), and, through it, to also draw our attention to the NUS Museum's cross-border ties with India from as early as 1959.

In addition to its remarkable repertoire of exhibitions and publications, the

NUS Museum inaugurated an Anniversary Lecture Series in its 60th year, 2015, to advance research on its institutional histories.

The first two Anniversary Lectures covered the origin story of the museum and their accompanying publications. By the third lecture it was time to spotlight the museum's collections. A suite of 55 objects and 100 photographs which travelled from India to Singapore in 1959 had long intrigued the museum's director, Ahmad Mashadi, and his team.

### Origins

Though a portion of this collection continues to be displayed for study and research purposes, its origins and underlying motivations remained obscure. What prompted the Government of India to donate these artefacts to the then University of Malaya Art Museum? This question steered an extensive research project under the auspices of the Anniversary Lecture, and with South Asia being my primary area of art historical research alongside my interest in collection studies, Mashadi invited me to research answers in 2018.

Through the Museum's carefully-curated

internship programme, we enlisted the help of student research assistants, Roy Ng and Rachel Lim, to gather as much data as possible from the Museum's archival holdings. Sadly, our findings remained limited, to the sole catalogue documenting the arrival of this donation and its exhibition in Singapore in 1959, and to newspaper articles reporting this first-of-its kind gift from India.

### Greatest Obstacle

Our greatest obstacle, however, was the total absence of names—of the museums, collections, agencies, or cities from which the objects were collated. With advice from senior historian Gyanesh Kudaisya, (South Asian Studies Programme, NUS) who has himself engaged with Indian archives closely, we turned our attention to the National Archives and the National Museum in New Delhi.

The summer of 2019 we spent chipping away at archival stacks and conducting oral interviews. Yet, direct records related





**“The 1959 donation was linked to both national and global developments: it was guided by numerous motivations and ideas... The inclusion of ancient, medieval, and modern art may have served well to establish India’s civilizational antiquity.”**

- Dr Priya M. Jaradi



(Opposite page, top row l to r): ● The Resource Gallery and India Donation display. ● Gandhraran Buddha. (Above l to r): ● Hunting Deer at Night painting. ● H.A. Gade 'Boatman' oil canvas. (Opposite page left): ● More exhibits from the Resource Gallery's India Donation. Photos courtesy of NUS Museum, National University of Singapore. Images are copyright of NUS and cannot be reproduced without permission.

to the 1959 donation remained elusive. Thankfully, the NUS Museum’s commitment to hands-on sessions offered much reprieve during these unrewarding times. The collections’ officer, Devika Murugaya, together with the Museum’s former Manager for Outreach and Education, Michelle Kuek, facilitated viewing sessions with scholars transiting through Singapore, namely, the late Professor Frederick Asher, Professor Himanshu Prabha Ray, and Dr Alexander Shaw; each session offered new observations and input. Upon noticing a signature-like embroidery on a nineteenth-century Kashmiri textile, we activated an informal network of translators, curators, and collectors who assisted us ably with its reading and interpretation.

Alongside our archival and object-based research, we read India’s and Malaya’s cultural and political histories in the decades from the 1940s to the 1960s within the global contexts of decolonization, the formation of new independent nation-states, the call to Afro-Asian solidarities, and the Cold War. These interdisciplinary readings and stray archival finds offered enough hints to confirm that the 1959 donation was linked to both national and global developments; it was guided by numerous motivations and ideas; perhaps the donation was made with a view to mark India’s presence in a new regional order.

The donation’s inclusion of ancient, medieval, and modern art may have served well to establish India’s civilizational antiquity. On the Malayan or Singaporean side, these Indian objects were received with immense enthusiasm to grow a nascent museum collection and, through it, to fulfil the vision of a multicultural Malayan nation.

### Foundational Reference

T. K. Sabapathy and Kwa Chong Guan, were of a pioneer generation of art historians and museum specialists in Singapore and presented the first two Anniversary Lectures respectively. It was their lectures that provided the foundational reference frame to understand how this donation was utilized in the context of a new Asia-centric art history curriculum and museum collection. Thus, at every step of this research, it was gratifying to learn that the gift was not motivated by a state-led diplomacy alone. Instead, curators and teachers on the ground inscribed different meanings into it; they mobilized the donation towards an array of museological, educational, and ideological purposes.

These preliminary propositions were presented at the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies, in December 2019, just before the virus gripped the world to close borders and halt all in-person activities. Thankfully, Zoom-enabled

workshops continued as part of the CAA-Getty’s “Global Conversations in Art History” (August 2020–February 2021). At these sessions, Professor Monica Juneja and the late Professor Asher raised pertinent questions to cultivate new lines of enquiry and new methods of interpreting the materials at hand. A few days before Singapore and New Delhi transitioned into their respective partial and complete lockdowns, our New Delhi-based archivist, Dr. Shilpi Goswami managed to send across one last batch of relevant materials. This stack ultimately enabled us to suggest that the donation was conceived in the context of the establishment of an Indian Studies Department at the University of Malaya in the 1950s.

This story of the 1959 donation bears a strong contemporary resonance for it was the first in what would become a series of gifts, donations, and even short- and long-term loans from the Government of India to Singapore’s museums. Bearing this in mind, the recently concluded Anniversary Lecture (2021) marks the beginning of a long-term research trajectory which aspires to study past and present India-Singapore museum exchanges in the form of objects and travelling exhibitions. We also hope that this project becomes the seed for a comparative, multi-author study which can examine similar donations made by the Government of India to other nation-states within Southeast Asia. As observed earlier, since the Anniversary Lecture remains unnamed and undedicated to any single person or family, it allows the research story to enjoy the undivided honour. In this month of August, when both Singapore and India celebrate their national days, we hope to honour the 1959 donation and its underlying spirit of collaboration and institution-building across borders.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Priya M. Jaradi, Convenor, Art History, National University of Singapore. Dr Jaradi delivered the Anniversary Lecture, Transcultural Imaginations: Revisiting the 1959 Donation from the Government of India to Malaya on 5 August 2021 at the National University of Singapore.

# Curated Indian Culture: From Gastronomy to Metaphysics



**Dr Gauri Parimoo Krishnan, Art Historian, Curator, Museum Expert (DMBG Consultants) shares insights on the long-standing, historic cultural connect between the two nations**



India and Singapore's bilateral relations for over 55 years, still endeavours to ensure the maintenance of stability, growth, peace and prosperity in the region. In recent decades, cultural diplomacy has received a great deal of attention, as a result of which culture and shared heritage have become centre stage in all events, especially the **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas**, among others.

Furthermore, ASEAN- India relations today are reflective of the ancient connection between the Indic civilisation on one hand and the polities of Southeast Asia on the other, which brought in many cultural, religious, and artistic goods, practices and philosophies originating or passing from the Indic region.

In 2015 ASEAN welcomed India's "Act East Policy", and ever since then many concrete projects and initiatives have been put in place to bridge the development gap. India's strategic partnerships with Singapore have grown by leaps and bounds since Singapore caught the "milk India fever" and former prime ministers Mr Goh Chok Tong and Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee explored ways to establish closer ties between the two countries.

In Singapore particularly, people and culture of Indian origin have existed for 200 years and comprise 9% of the total population. Indian culture, predominantly Tamil to begin with, has been richly diverse, colourful and immersive for the multicultural Singaporeans, who grow up hearing sounds of *Nadaswaram* from Hindu temples dotted around the island, enjoying the aromas of spices, coffee and mallipu at Serangoon Road or sung *Munneru Valiba*, a Tamil national song in school while growing up.

The celebrations of diverse Indian Festivals, traditions of food, costumes and cultural artefacts have made their way into many

homes, schools, colleges, and community centres—not forgetting, of course, in the inimitable influences of *Navaratri dandia* and Bollywood. What is even more unique is that there would be no Singaporean who would not have seen or heard of the Hindu festivals of Thaipusam and Fire Walking celebrated by devotees in the colourful procession moving along the main arterial roads of Singapore. Even multiracial participation in these festivals has become commonplace. Some of these festivals are over 170 years old and merit being nominated for UNESCO World Heritage recognition.

"Curated Indian Culture" in Singapore has grown over the past two centuries, integrating and upholding a sense of identity carefully selected, nurtured and perpetuated across generations by pioneers from the Indian subcontinent. They migrated here first in search of work but over time established their roots and began practicing their ways of life, slowly establishing their cultural markers – known today as tangible and intangible heritage. They faced challenges, at times were even ostracised by others, but this never dampened their spirit and they forged ahead keeping their language, food habits, religion, customs and festivals alive.

## Beyond the Streetscape

Moving beyond the streetscape and school life, one meets with Indian culture in different spheres of institutional spaces in Singapore. There are a considerable number of Hindu and Jain temples, mosques, churches, and *gurdwaras* scattered around Singapore. Two of them, gazetted national monuments – **The Mariamman Temple** and **Jamae Mosque**, located on the South Bride Road in Chinatown, bear witness to the multiracial values and foster integration. In addition, there are several religious, cultural, business and educational organisations





and associations in Singapore with active memberships and programmes. There are spiritual and religious organisations teaching Hindu philosophy including the Holy Bhagavad Gita in Singapore. There are religious advisory boards appointed by the Singapore government as well as endowment boards that go back to the colonial period in management of religious institutions and management of endowments, that provide advice to the government on religious matters, and also address the needs of their communities in the ever-evolving economic and cultural times of the day.

### Language Studies

Many mother tongue languages such as Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali, are taught in local schools, while the National University (NUS) teaches Tamil and Hindi as an elective subject. There is also the South Asian Studies Programme and an Institute of South Asian Studies in the National University, that focus on political, economic, technological, social and diaspora matters related to India and the region of South Asia.

Indians in Singapore have not pursued visual arts to the extent that they have laboured to teach, learn, perform, and propagate music and dance especially of the classical variety such as Carnatic and Hindustani music, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Orissi, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Kalaripayattu. Even folk music and dance are now being revived, as they certainly existed in the past but faded away over time.

A defining factor in this revival has been the constant exposure to India and settling down of dancers and musicians trained in India in the island-nation, which generated momentum in the appreciation of the classical arts in Singapore. Even the **National Arts Council** and **People's Association** today supports many artists and arts schools with growing

opportunities for performance, housing and funding for development. Today there are many such cultural organisations such as **The Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society, Apsaras Arts Ltd, Nritayalaya Aesthetics Society, Temple of Fine Arts**, amongst a host of others who have upheld not only teaching, but also professional level performances at national and international festivals.

### Institutional Support

The most noteworthy institutional support for Indian heritage in Singapore began in the 1990s when the Singapore government developed the **South Asia Gallery** and collection of the newly conceived **Asian Civilisations Museum** (opened in 2003) as well as the development of the **Indian Heritage Centre** on Campbell Lane (opened in 2015). Having been closely associated with both these institutions, I have contributed to their conceptual framework, collection development and curated their permanent galleries and some special exhibitions. Most noteworthy among them is the first Indian exhibition *Alamkara: 5000 Years of India*, on loan from the government of India to Singapore, and was organised under the first Cultural Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries. This paved the way for further cooperation in loan of artefacts for exhibitions in recent years such as the *On the Nalanda Trail, Ramayana Revisited, Scripts and Symbols, From the Coromandel Coast to the Straits* exhibitions.

From initially attracting traders and businessmen in the 20th century as a free port, Singapore today attracts many artists, performers, cultural practitioners, chefs, fashion designers and spiritual leaders from the Indian subcontinent and across its widely scattered diaspora as a cultural hub and destination of repute.

**“A defining factor in this revival has been the constant exposure to India and settling down of dancers and musicians trained in India in the island-nation, which generated momentum in the appreciation of the classical arts in Singapore. Even the National Arts Council and People's Association today supports many artists and arts schools with growing opportunities for performance, housing and funding for development.”**

# Handloom: Symbol of India's Cultural Heritage

*Handloom sector is a symbol of India's rich and varied cultural heritage and a contributor to the socio-economic development of the country*



#VocalForLocal



• The Indian handloom sector is ancient and has served the economy well in terms of employment. The relevance of the sector in the agrarian economy is massive because of its linkages with crucial and sensitive sectors like agriculture. It uses agricultural products as raw materials and, therefore, provides an ever-ready market for agricultural produce

**T**he handloom sector is an important source of livelihood in rural and semi-rural parts of our country. It is a sector that directly addresses women's empowerment with over 70% of all weavers and allied workers being female.

Rooted in nature, it has eco-friendly production processes with minimal requirement of capital and power, and provides inherent flexibility to innovate to meet changes in fashion trends and fast-changing customer preferences.

The Swadeshi Movement which was launched on 7th August, 1905 had encouraged indigenous industries and in particular handloom weavers.

In 2015, the Government of India decided to designate the 7th August every year, as the National Handloom Day.

The first National Handloom Day was inaugurated on 7 August 2015 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Chennai.

On this day, India honours its handloom weaving community and highlights the contribution of this sector in the socio-economic development of this country. The country also reaffirms its resolve to protect its handloom heritage and to

## Awards Recognise and Reward Excellence in Weaving

India's Ministry of Textiles has been annually conferring various awards like Sant Kabir Award, National Award and National Merit Certificates, towards excellence in weaving, design development, and marketing efforts.

In addition to the above, State Governments also have their own schemes where they have earmarked significant outlays from their State budget towards betterment of weaver households in their State. These are initiatives over and beyond the centrally sponsored schemes which they partner in beneficiary identification and implementation. Some of the States with prominent schemes of their own include West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

empower the handloom weavers and workers with greater opportunities. The Government endeavours to ensure sustainable development of the handloom sector thereby empowering handloom weavers and workers financially and instilling pride in their exquisite craftsmanship.



• The Ministry of Textiles through the Office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms works for the sustainable development of the handloom sector this includes skill up-gradation training and exposure is given to weavers and allied workers for learning new weaving techniques, adaption of new technology, development of new designs and colours, learning about new types of eco-friendly dyes and dyeing practices, exposure to basic accounting and management practices, familiarisation with e-commerce, etc.



# GIIS Creates History with 16 World Toppers

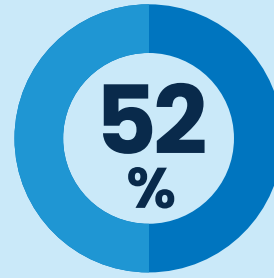
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Bharati

Akshay  
Puri

Anahita  
Wangoo

Keyur  
Gongulur

Asha  
Shinde

Aryan  
Sharma

Aatmaananda  
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