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INDIA'S STUNNING INFRA GROWTH STORY

TUNNELLING ITS WAY TO DEVELOPMENT

METRO PROJECTS CATALYSING GROWTH

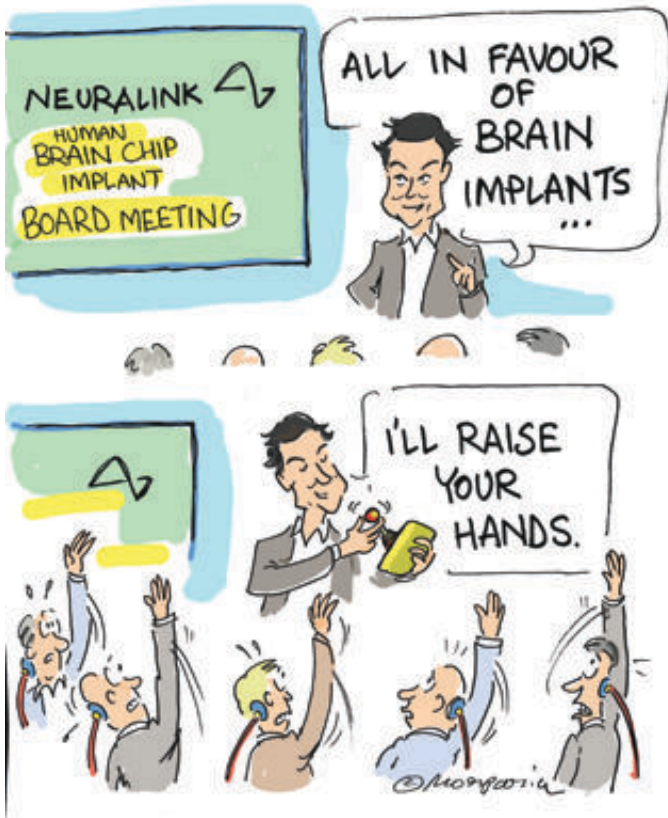
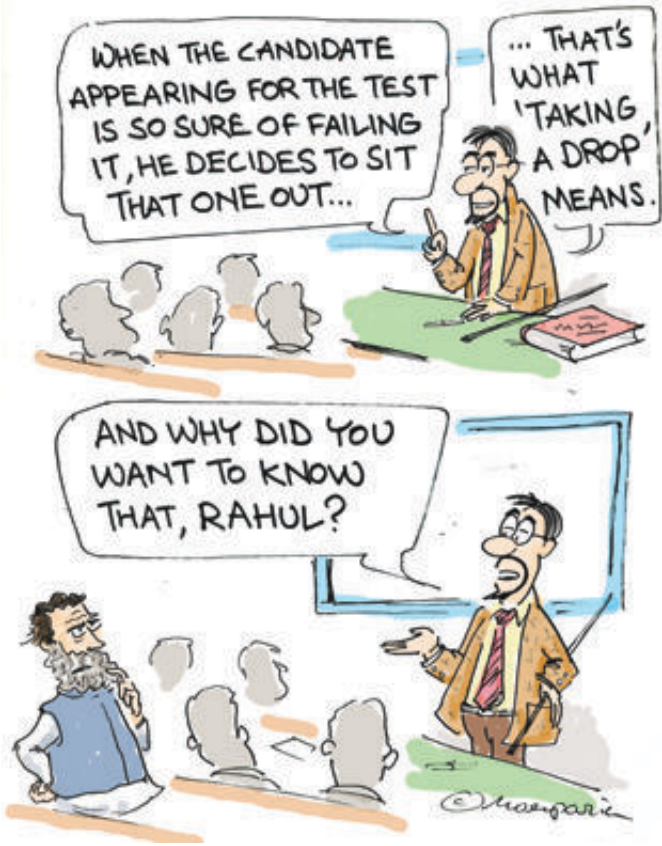
Know India Better

A NEW DAMAN MAKING WAVES
WITH WORLD-CLASS HERITAGE

Face to Face

PUSHPA YASHWANT MOHOD

Great Indians : Jayanta Mahapatra | Ameen Sayani | Captain Shubham Gupta Sm



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Managing Editor
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde

Editor
Anuradha Dhareshwar

Design
Ananta Art Services

OIOP Clubs
Nagesh Bangera

Printed & Published by
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde for
One India One People Foundation,
Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th floor,
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,
Mumbai - 400 026
Tel: 022-2353 4400
Fax: 022-2351 7544
e-mail: oiopfoundation@gmail.com
oiopsub@fouressindia.com



JAYANTA MAHAPATRA



AMEEN SAYANI



CAPTAIN SHUBHAM
GUPTA SM

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India's stunning infra growth story

Manu Shrivastava traces the spectacular trajectory of the country scripting a colossal story of infrastructural growth through myriad projects -- endeavours spanning across a diverse spectrum of sectors, ranging from transportation and energy to industrial infrastructure, with each project meticulously designed to serve a unique purpose in propelling the nation towards its developmental aspirations.



India strives to strike a balance between meeting the colossal energy demand and preserving the delicate ecological balance

The infrastructure enhancement initiatives in India mirror the creation of a colossal architectural wonder, with a plethora of projects unfurling across the vast expanse of the nation. These endeavours span across a diverse spectrum of sectors, ranging from transportation and energy to industrial infrastructure, with each project meticulously designed to serve a unique purpose in propelling the nation towards its developmental aspirations.

Picture the breathtaking coastal highways snaking their way along the pristine shores, reminiscent of elegant ribbons adorning a majestic landscape. Imagine the sprawling solar farms, bathed in the warm embrace of sunlight. These monumental undertakings serve as physical manifestations of

India's resolute commitment to bolstering connectivity, promoting economic growth, and embracing sustainable practices.

The construction of these infrastructural marvels, whether it be the towering bridges spanning India's prosperous lands or the network of tunnels delving deep into the earth's core, is part of the efforts that converge towards a singular objective - to ensure connectivity, seamlessly linking bustling urban centers with busy ports and remote hinterlands alike.

The infrastructure sector of India is also its biggest economic growth driver. Between 2024 and 2030, an

investment of over USD 143 trillion is being planned on infrastructure development focusing on power, solar, wind, roads, electric transportation, etc.

Meeting industrial demands

Every highway completed, every bridge erected, and every airport constructed serves as a milestone in the journey towards economic vitality and social inclusivity. Moreover, as the nation marches forward, revitalising ports to become hubs of commerce and establishing power plants to meet the burgeoning energy demands, the landscape transformation is spectacular, to say the least.

The fast-paced infrastructure development in India is a testament to the country's unwavering determination to carve its niche on the global stage, attracting foreign investments and strengthening its stature as a key player in the global trade arena, all while embracing cleaner and greener technologies to mitigate the environmental impact.

At the same time, the proliferation of solar farms dotted across the countryside paints a picture of sustainable development and energy diversification. These vast expanses of panels, under the radiant glow of the sun, represent a beacon of hope in the fight against climate change and energy insecurity. By harnessing the abundant solar energy resources, India aims to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, combat climate change, and bolster energy security. These farms are also hotbeds of innovation, ushering in a new era of technological advancement in the renewable energy sector while providing numerous employment opportunities.

They are not just sources of renewable energy but also symbols of innovation and progress, creating employment opportunities and driving technological advancements in the renewable energy sector. Energy security is a major issue that has been baffling the developed world and India is already taking the lead.

As these grand infrastructure projects unfold, navigating through the maze of financial challenges and environmental considerations, they stand as a testament to India's unwavering resolve for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Each project contributes in its own unique way to the progress of the nation, rewriting India's growth story and positioning it as a formidable force on the global platform. It's a journey marked by resilience, innovation, and an unwavering determination, as India prepares for a brighter and more sustainable future for generations to come.

Ensuring connectivity

At the core of India's infrastructure development lies a grand vision of connectivity, through the construction of coastal highways, modern bridges, tunnels, railway passes, ports and swanky airports. Each of these projects has a single-focus purpose of creating seamless interconnectedness binding major urban centers and transportation hubs into a cohesive network.

These infrastructure marvels are not mere structures but lifelines pulsating with vitality, ensuring swift and efficient movement of goods and people, and promoting local and regional development. They stimulate a flurry of activity, trade and tourism while infusing newfound vigour into the regional economies.

Seamless movement of goods and people facilitates economic growth and prosperity and are crucial for any growing nation. This also serves as a catalyst for tourism, enticing travellers with the promise of scenic coastal drives, awe-inspiring bridge crossings, and smooth airport experiences.

The infusion of investments directed towards the modernisation of ports, railway stations, airports, etc. marks a transformative leap. Ports are the beating heart of commerce, facilitating seamless flow of goods and services. With modernisation efforts, characterised by state-of-the-art facilities and streamlined operations, ports ensure smoother cargo handling operations and expedited turnaround times.

Enhanced efficiency has acted as a magnet for foreign investment, as investors flock to capitalise on the growing opportunities presented by India's thriving port infrastructure.

Consequently, India's global trade stature has ascended to new heights, solidifying its position as a formidable player in the international trade and commerce.

Energy and environment

The establishment of several new power plants underscores India's steadfast commitment to addressing the country's growing energy demand, and at the same time, consider the imperatives of environmental sustainability. India is abundant in many natural resources, renewable and non-renewable, and the new power plant projects are optimising the use of these resources, to fulfil industrial and residential energy needs.

However, amidst the pursuit of energy sufficiency, India remains unwavering in its dedication to environmental stewardship. There is a resolute emphasis on adopting cleaner and more sustainable technologies mitigating the environmental impact associated with conventional technologies.

Through the deployment of advanced technologies such as carbon capture and storage, and the integration of renewable energy sources into the power generation mix, India strives to strike a delicate balance between meeting the colossal energy demand and preserving the delicate ecological balance. The new energy infrastructure development works have bolstered India's leadership with its dual commitment to economic advancement and environmental stewardship.

Multi-pronged development

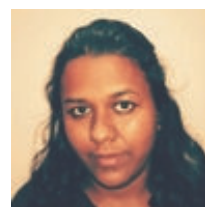
The construction of bridges, tunnels, highways, aviation, shipping and inland waterways, etc., symbolises India's commitment to building a more connected, prosperous, and inclusive future. These awe-inspiring undertakings not only enhance connectivity and stimulate economic growth but also embody the spirit of progress and inclusivity, bridging divides and forging pathways to a brighter tomorrow for all.

The Minister of Road Transport and Highways launched 15 national highway projects worth INR 13,585 crores in June 2022 to be completed in Bihar's Patna and Hajipur. The government has offered ample policy support as well. The 2023-24 Budget of the country has continued the provision of 50-year interest-free loan to state governments to boost infrastructure investment.

National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF), established in November 2022, is a joint platform for investment between several crucial entities – the Indian government, domestic financial institutions, foreign investors and multilateral development banks (MDB).

There also has been a continuous focus on the Northeast region of India for inclusive development. This has been emphasised by the government on multiple occasions. The latest budget has also established an Infrastructure Finance Secretariat to promote private investment opportunities in the infrastructure sector.

The imperatives of environmental conservation and ecological preservation cannot be overlooked. While infrastructure development drives economic progress, it also poses risks to delicate ecosystems and natural resources. India, on its part, has actively been integrating comprehensive environmental impact assessments, adopting sustainable practices, and implementing robust climate resilience measures which are essential to mitigate adverse ecological impacts and safeguard the country's rich biodiversity.



Manu Shrivastava is a journalist and lawyer with DraftCraft International and Co-Convenor of #TheWomanSurvivor, #MeTooAtHome and #MeTooBeyondBorders initiatives.

The truly resilient Atal Setu

Gajanan Khergamker narrates how the 22-kilometer-long marvel of engineering, inaugurated by PM Modi stands not just as a symbol of advancement and growth but also prides itself on its eco-friendly attributes, putting it on par with the world's finest bridges. Standing tall at a towering height of 100 meters, it not only claims the title of India's longest sea bridge but also stands among the world's tallest cable-stayed bridges.



Atal Setu, India's longest sea bridge, an engineering marvel that puts it on par with the world's finest bridges

Mumbai, renowned as the city of aspirations, famed for its lively pace of life, bustling thoroughfares, and renowned landmarks, recently welcomed a significant addition - the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu.

On 12 January 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's lengthiest bridge, linking Sewri in Mumbai to Nhava Sheva in Uran Taluka of Navi Mumbai.

This 22-kilometer-long marvel of engineering stands not just as a symbol of advancement and growth but also prides itself on its eco-friendly attributes, putting it on par with the world's finest bridges.

During the event, PM Modi fondly reminisced about his 'dear friend' Shinzo Abe following the inauguration of the Mumbai

Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) or Atal Setu, crediting the former Japanese PM for envisioning the project alongside him.

Addressing the audience after inaugurating India's longest sea bridge, the Prime Minister expressed gratitude to the Japanese government for its support in bringing the project to fruition. "Today, I wish to recall my dear friend, the late Shinzo Abe. Both of us were committed to completing the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link project," he said.

The six-lane cable-stayed Atal Setu, stretching over 22 kilometers, is crafted to accommodate heavy vehicular traffic between these vital commercial zones in Mumbai. Its distinctive curved design sets it apart, making it a visually captivating structure amidst Mumbai's bridge network. Standing tall at a towering height of 100 meters, it not only claims the title of

Atal Setu's environmentally conscious design is one of its most prominent features. Every detail of the bridge's construction has been carefully planned and executed to minimise its impact on the surrounding ecosystem. This includes using sustainable materials and implementing measures to reduce noise pollution.

The bridge's construction incorporates high-strength concrete with a lower carbon footprint compared to traditional concrete. This not only enhances the bridge's durability but also helps in reducing carbon emissions, contributing to environmental sustainability. Additionally, solar panels installed on the bridge deck harness solar energy, reducing reliance on traditional energy sources and promoting renewable energy usage.

Furthermore, Atal Setu is equipped with cutting-edge technology, setting it apart from other bridges in India. An intelligent transportation system, consisting of sensors, cameras, and automated toll collection systems, ensures smooth traffic flow and enhances overall efficiency. Moreover, an advanced monitoring system constantly monitors the bridge's structural integrity, promptly alerting authorities to any irregularities or potential issues.

Designed to withstand natural disasters such as earthquakes and cyclones, Atal Setu showcases India's technological expertise and resilience. It not only represents progress but also demonstrates the nation's ability to overcome challenges and build infrastructure that can withstand adverse conditions.

Transforming landscapes

The completion of Atal Setu marks a significant milestone not only for Mumbai's skyline but also for its economic landscape. By connecting Sewri to Nhava Sheva and drastically reducing travel time from two hours to just 20 minutes, the bridge is poised to revolutionise trade, commerce, and local employment opportunities in the region.

Moreover, Atal Setu's environmentally friendly design is expected to attract tourists from around the world. Offering breathtaking panoramic views of Mumbai's skyline, the bridge solidifies the city's status as a premier tourist destination.

Beyond its functional role as a bridge, Atal Setu symbolises India's journey of progress and development. With its fusion of advanced technology, eco-conscious design, and striking aesthetics, the bridge stands alongside the world's finest structures, showcasing India's engineering prowess on a global stage.

Not only does Atal Setu improve commuters' lives, but it also contributes to Mumbai's evolution into a truly world-class city. Setting a new benchmark for infrastructure projects in the country, the bridge's eco-friendly features and advanced technology mark a proud moment for India and a step towards a greener, more sustainable future.

Modern and marvellous

India's infrastructure development efforts, exemplified by projects like the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, and the Golden Quadrilateral Highway network, have garnered international recognition. Atal Setu adds to this legacy, underscoring India's commitment to modernisation and progress in the realm of infrastructure development.

While it may not hold the record for the longest sea bridge in the world in terms of length, Atal Setu's engineering techniques and its ability to overcome challenges in constructing a bridge over a vast water body are truly commendable.

During the bridge's construction, special attention was paid to its potential impact on the environment, particularly on aquatic life and flamingos inhabiting Thane Creek. Strict guidelines were followed, including the installation of special foundations and limiting construction activities during peak migratory bird seasons, to minimise disruption to the delicate ecosystem.

Advanced engineering techniques, including the use of advanced materials and precision engineering, were employed to

Futuristic development

India has taken proactive steps towards environmental conservation through the implementation of various policies and regulations. Initiatives such as the Clean Ganga mission, aimed at rejuvenating the River Ganges and promoting its cleanliness, and wildlife conservation programmes like Project Tiger, designed to protect endangered species and their habitats, underscore the country's dedication to sustainable development and environmental protection.

The construction of Atal Setu has played a significant role in advancing India's environmental goals. By improving transportation efficiency and reducing travel time between Sewri and Nhava Sheva, the bridge has contributed to a substantial decrease in the region's carbon footprint. This reduction is attributed to lower fuel consumption and emissions from vehicles, resulting in improved air quality and environmental health.

India's commitment to renewable energy and low-carbon transportation systems further reinforces its dedication to environmental sustainability. By focusing on renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power, as well as developing low-carbon transportation alternatives, India aims to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. This strategic approach aligns with the country's broader goal of achieving sustainable development while fostering economic growth.

India's implementation of environmental policies and regulations, coupled with initiatives like Atal Setu, reflects its proactive stance towards environmental conservation and sustainable development. By prioritising renewable energy and adopting low-carbon transportation systems, India strives to strike a balance between economic progress and environmental protection, paving the way for a greener and more sustainable future.

The propaganda

Following the inauguration of Atal Setu, there were reports of criticism from foreign media, which lacked factual basis and seemed politically motivated. Such criticisms have been evident in the past as well, indicating a tendency to discredit India's infrastructure development achievements.

The construction of Atal Setu is part of India's broader infrastructure expansion efforts, aimed at modernising the country's transportation network, reducing congestion, and promoting economic growth.

Criticism from certain quarters, including think tanks from distant locations such as Philadelphia, seems to overlook the technological advancements incorporated into the bridge's design to address present-day concerns and anticipate future challenges.

Despite initial concerns about the bridge being constructed exclusively for affluent private vehicle owners, the toll charges for its use are justified by the need to repay loans from international agencies and are in line with charges for similar infrastructure projects elsewhere in India.

Every action, including the construction of Atal Setu, has its consequences, but its positive impact on connectivity, emissions reduction, and overall development cannot be ignored. As India continues its journey towards progress and sustainable development, Atal Setu stands as a testament to the nation's determination and resilience.



Gajanan Khergamker is an independent Editor, Solicitor and Film-maker. He is the founder of the International Think Tank DraftCraft.

Tunnelling its way to development

Pointing out the thrust Modi government has given to strengthen infrastructure development, **Nandini Rao** says tunnels are now serving as channels for transportation networks, enabling efficient connectivity across diverse terrains. In India, where geographical diversity poses challenges to connectivity, tunnels emerge as engineering marvels, bridging gaps and facilitating smoother movement of goods and people.



India`s strategic Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh near the China border is the highest mountain tunnel road situated at an altitude of 13,800 ft

Tunnels have played a crucial role in India's infrastructure development, significantly augmenting connectivity to further economic growth and boosting trade, commerce, and tourism. From facilitating smoother transportation to enabling access to remote regions, tunnels have become indispensable elements in India's infrastructure landscape. The role of tunnels in driving infrastructure growth and catalysing grassroots changes for the people is multi-faceted.

Tunnels serve as channels for transportation networks, enabling efficient connectivity across diverse terrains. In India, where geographical diversity poses challenges to connectivity,

tunnels emerge as engineering marvels, bridging gaps and facilitating smoother movement of goods and people.

Protecting borders

On the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the border conflict with China in eastern Ladakh, the long-awaited Sela Tunnel was inaugurated in Arunachal Pradesh. This is the highest mountain tunnel road in India situated at an altitude of 13,800 ft.

The objective of its construction is to ensure a year-round, especially the extremely harsh winters and thick snow,

connectivity in the region of Arunachal Pradesh that is marred by border dispute between India and China. It is a very important development for the Indian Army to protect the country's borders for resource mobilisation, etc.

The government of India has initiated construction of several new tunnels along the India-China border to strengthen and ensure swift and uninterrupted road connectivity to protect the country's borders. Till August last, five tunnels were already completed and ten were in progress while seven were in the planning stage.

Since the time of coming to power, the Modi government has given special attention to strengthening the country's borders and infrastructure development has been at the core of this. The government has escalated the Border Road Organisation budget almost four times from INR 3,782 crore (2013-14) to INR 14,387 crore in (2023-24).

Additionally, in February 2024, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) approved an allocation of INR 6,728.33 crore for the construction of eight stretches on the Frontier Highway in Arunachal Pradesh. This is an Intermediate Lane Road spanning 305.5 km on Engineering Procurement Construction (EPC) mode.

As per Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, the Frontier Highway is being constructed to control migration and promote reverse habitation towards the border regions of Arunachal Pradesh. It is aimed to set in place important road infrastructure which is lacking presently and connect river basins to facilitate the development of hydropower projects.

Arunachal Frontier Highway (AFH) or National Highway NH-913 aka Bomdila-Vijaynagar Highway (BVH) is being constructed along the India-China LAC-McMahon Line border. The approximately 1,700 km-long highway project is part of a big road infrastructure push in Arunachal Pradesh and is aimed to be completed by 2027.

Revolutionising transportation

The inauguration of the Chenani-Nashri Tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir in 2017 marked a significant achievement in infrastructure development in India. Stretching over an impressive distance of 9.2 km, this road tunnel serves as a link, seamlessly connecting the town of Chenani in Udhampur with Nashri in the Ramban district in Jammu.

By traversing through the formidable Pir Panjal range, the tunnel aka Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Tunnel has effectively overcome geographical barriers, revolutionising transportation dynamics in the region. The Chenani-Nashri Tunnel has drastically reduced travel time between the two regions and provides commuters with a safer and more efficient passage.

Prior to the tunnel's construction, travellers were forced to navigate treacherous mountain roads, often subjected to adverse weather conditions and the inherent risks of mountainous terrain. However, with this tunnel, this arduous journey has been replaced by a swift and seamless commute, offering commuters a reliable mode of transport throughout the year.

The tunnel has been built at an altitude of 1,200 metre and has reduced the travel distance between Jammu and Srinagar by about 40 km and time by two hours. It is providing enhanced connectivity to the residents of Kishtwar, Doda and Bhandarwah in the Jammu region and bypasses the landslide prone areas of Patnitop, Batote and Kud on NH 44.

Modern features

There are several state-of-the-art modern features incorporated in this tunnel such as - Integrated Traffic Control System, Entrance Detection Control System, Active Firefighting System, Electronic Surveillance System, Evacuative Broadcast System, and Tunnel Ventilation System. The Chenani-Nashri Tunnel has increased socio-economic growth in the region by facilitating easier access to places of work, study, markets and has created new avenues for employment and entrepreneurship.

The Chenani-Nashri Tunnel has emerged as a major

tourist attraction, drawing visitors from far and wide. Tourists now flock to the region to experience the natural beauty of the surrounding Pir Panjal range and witness the engineering ingenuity behind the tunnel construction.

Tunnels also contribute to environmental sustainability by facilitating the movement of goods through efficient routes, fostering a greener and more sustainable future for communities. Tunnels stand as crucial pillars in India's relentless pursuit of infrastructure development. They play an irreplaceable role in facilitating smoother transportation across daunting terrains, effectively bridging geographical divides and ensuring seamless movement of goods and people.

By providing reliable and efficient transport routes, tunnels unlock new opportunities for remote and underserved regions, empowering local communities and stimulating economic growth from the ground up, bolstering economic activity at the grassroots. By streamlining logistics and reducing transportation costs, tunnels create conducive conditions for business expansion, spurring entrepreneurship, and job creation along their routes. This economic dynamism cascades through local economies, empowering communities and contributing to overall regional development.

Breaking barriers, literally

The Atal Tunnel, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the presence of Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh, Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh Jai Ram Thakur and Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur, in October 2020, heralded a new era of connectivity and opportunity for the picturesque region of Himachal Pradesh.

The tunnel is situated in the Himalayan Pir Panjal Range and constructed at a formidable altitude of 10,000 ft. It is the longest tunnel in the world at that altitude and is an all-weather 9.02 km long tunnel. Its strategic location and all-weather accessibility have transformed the region's landscape, offering locals a dependable channel for travel and trade regardless of the weather conditions.

Built by the Border Roads Organisation, the tunnel has been designed as a single tube, two laned, bi-directional horseshoe shaped tunnel and connects Manali in the South to the Lahaul-Spiti Valley in the North, throughout the year transcending the challenges posed by the seasonal closure of the treacherous Rohtang Pass.

Among the firsts, it is India's first tunnel to have an escape tunnel within the main tunnel. For the residents of Lahaul-Spiti Valley, it is more than just a physical passage; it symbolises a gateway to prosperity and progress. Previously isolated during the harsh winter months when the Rohtang Pass succumbed to heavy snowfall, the valley now enjoys uninterrupted connectivity year-round.

This newfound accessibility has revolutionised daily life, facilitating easier access to essential services, healthcare and work opportunities for local communities. Today, visitors flock to Lahaul-Spiti Valley to witness its breathtaking landscapes, explore its rich cultural heritage, and engage in adventure activities such as trekking and skiing.

The surge in tourism has created employment opportunities and bolstered the livelihoods of the local populace, creating a sense of economic empowerment and self-sufficiency. Local farmers and artisans can now transport their produce and handicrafts to markets in Manali and beyond, expanding their reach and augmenting their income. This exchange of goods and services has stimulated economic activity in a big way.

Nandini Rao is a media researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Metro projects catalysing growth

Neeti Prakash examines the growing phenomenon of metro network in metro cities, mentioning how effectively they can integrate with other modes of transportation, including buses, taxis, auto-rickshaws, and non-motorised transport such as bicycles and pedestrian pathways. With attendant challenges, what is needed are concerted efforts from government authorities and private stakeholders to ensure their timely and cost-effective implementation.



India's first underwater metro in Kolkata

Metro projects in India have become a crucial part of the country's infrastructure development as they are improving the transportation scenario in various cities, reducing traffic congestion on roads, and promoting environmental sustainability as a mode of mass public transportation.

Today, metro trains are running in most big cities including Delhi and NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Jaipur, Kochi, Lucknow, etc. While Kolkata's is the oldest and the first metro rail system in India, the largest and the busiest metro system is Delhi Metro. Unlike other transport infrastructure, most Indian metro projects are and have been developed in phases owing to various factors.

The success of metro projects depends on effective integration with other modes of transportation, including buses, taxis, auto-rickshaws, and non-motorised transport such as bicycles and pedestrian pathways. Integrated multimodal

transportation systems ensure seamless connectivity and provide commuters with multiple options for travel, thereby reducing reliance on private vehicles, ensuring last mile connectivity, and promoting sustainable urban mobility.

Furthermore, metro projects in India are leveraging advanced technologies and innovative solutions to enhance passenger experience and operational efficiency. From state-of-the-art signalling systems and automated fare collection systems to real-time passenger information systems and energy-efficient trains, metro systems are embracing cutting-edge technologies to provide world-class service to commuters.

Despite their numerous benefits, metro projects in India also face challenges such as funding constraints, land acquisition issues, and regulatory hurdles. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from both government authorities and private stakeholders to ensure timely and

cost-effective implementation of metro projects.

In India, Metro rail systems are becoming popular as a mass transit option because road-based public transport systems like bus are unable to meet the capacity requirements. Also, the trains are fast and more comfortable and highly efficient. So, the Metro Rail Project in India has been instrumental in furthering environmental-friendly Low-Carbon Transport (LCT).

Modern urban planning

The Delhi Metro, a marvel of modern urban planning, symbolises the advancement of transportation infrastructure in the bustling metropolis of Delhi. Established in 2002, it swiftly evolved into an indispensable facet of the city's transportation network, efficiently connecting disparate corners of the national capital region.

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Limited (DMRC) was registered in 1995 to bring into existence the Mass Rapid Transport System (MRTS) in the region. It was in 2002 that the DMRC launched the first corridor of the Delhi Metro between Shahdara and Tis Hazari. Presently, Delhi Metro traverses 288 stations and about 392 km crossing state borders to reach, Ghaziabad, Noida, Gurugram, Faridabad, etc.

Each day, the Delhi Metro serves millions of passengers. The DMRC recorded an average 5.56 million passengers per day in 2023, which was 4.09 million passengers in 2022, and 5.05 million passengers in 2019. Weekends see more crowds with an average 6.02 million daily passengers in 2023, 4.47 million passengers in 2022, and 5.46 million passengers in 2019.

Beyond its sheer scale and efficiency, the Delhi Metro carries with it a profound environmental impact. Amidst the perennial challenge of urban air pollution, it emerges as a beacon of sustainability, significantly reducing the city's carbon footprint.

By providing a viable alternative to private vehicles, the metro system champions the cause of cleaner air and a healthier environment for Delhi's denizens. Delhi Metro is more than just a transit system; it is a symbol of progress and connectivity, transforming the urban landscape while championing the cause of sustainability and inclusivity in the vibrant heart of Delhi.

Mumbai's metro

The Mumbai Metro is another significant rapid transit system in India, aimed to decrease traffic congestion and travel time in the heavily populated city. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) established the Maha Mumbai Metro Operation Corporation Limited (MMMOCL), a public sector undertaking, in June 2019 to perform operation and maintenance of Mumbai Metropolitan Region's (MMR) all Metro corridors.

The project, the sixth longest operational metro network in India with an operational length of 46.4 km as of January 2023, is being completed in three phases. At the end of the construction, the city will have 14 high-capacity metro railway lines and one metrolite line. These will cover about 356 km of which 24 per cent will be below ground and remaining majority portion on elevated platform. These lines will have 286 stations serving the financial capital.

Initially, in 2004, the MMRDA had proposed a 146 km metro project plan with multiple lines. In 2015, a new plan approved 118 km and, finally, in 2019, when MMOCL was established, it announced a new plan covering 337 km through a network of ten lines.

One of the key benefits of the Mumbai Metro is its contribution to environmental sustainability. By reducing carbon footprint and promoting public transport, the metro project has

helped in improving air quality in the city. Additionally, the Mumbai Metro offers a comfortable and reliable travel experience to commuters, making it the preferred mode of travel for many.

The oldest and the finest

The Kolkata Metro started in 1984 with the aim to provide a convenient, affordable, and safe mode of transport to the residents of the City of Joy. One of the key benefits of the Kolkata Metro is its improved connectivity within the city. The metro network has connected various suburbs and business districts, making it easier for people to travel.

Additionally, the Kolkata Metro has contributed to the economic development of the city by attracting investments and creating job opportunities.

Interestingly, more recently, Kolkata etched its name in the annals of history with the momentous inauguration of its underwater metro on 6 March 2024, heralding a landmark achievement in India's infrastructure evolution. India's first underwater metro, an integral part of the Kolkata Metro extension, it spans a distance of 4.8 km from Howrah Maidan to Esplanade and constitutes the second segment of the East-West Metro corridor, linking Howrah Maidan to Salt Lake Sector V, the bustling IT hub of West Bengal. It has been built at a cost of INR 4,960 crore.

The firsts don't end here as the Howrah Maidan-Esplanade section of the east-west corridor also has the first transportation tunnel under 'any mighty river in India.' This tunnel passes under the Hooghly River. Additionally, the Howrah Metro Station, which lies in this stretch and at a depth of 32 metres below ground, is the deepest metro station in India.

This subaquatic metro venture signifies a substantial investment in Kolkata's transportation infrastructure, aiming to alleviate congestion and fortify connectivity for residents and commuters alike. With Prime Minister Modi's inauguration of the under-river tunnel, Kolkata ascends to the league of global urban centres boasting innovative subterranean transit systems.

Beyond its technical prowess, the underwater metro holds promise in catalysing the city's economic dynamism by facilitating expedited and efficient commuter travel, thereby fostering business expansion and development along the metro route. Furthermore, the judiciously priced ticket structure ensures accessibility for a broad spectrum of commuters, rendering public transit an economically viable option for daily travel.

Metro projects have been initiated in several Indian cities. The Hyderabad Metro serving the residents of Hyderabad was started in November 2017 from the Miyapur rail station. Many cities in India are witnessing the rapid expansion of metro networks such as Agra, Chennai, etc. With their focus on efficiency, connectivity, and innovation, metro systems are paving the way for smarter, more sustainable cities in India and setting new benchmarks for urban mobility.

Neeti Prakash is a media researcher affiliated with The History and Heritage Project – a DraftCraft International Initiative dedicated to documenting details, analysing facts, and addressing gaps that may arise due to oversight or the advancement of national or foreign agendas within the realms of History and Heritage across India and beyond borders.

Bridges, testimony to engineering marvels

Citing glittering examples of Chenab Bridge and the Bogibeel Bridge, Ruchi Verma makes out a case of India emerging as global leader in bridge construction. By providing easier access to picturesque regions and cultural attractions, these bridges have become conduits in boosting tourism and are attracting global footprint. Apart from bolstering local economy, they have also created employment opportunities in the hospitality and related sectors.



Chenab Bridge, the world's highest rail bridge in India epitomises India's engineering excellence and innovative spirit

India's emergence and excellence as a global leader in engineering excellence, particularly in the realm of bridge construction, is unquestionable. Two examples of India's remarkable engineering feats are the Chenab Bridge in Kashmir and the Bogibeel Bridge in Assam. These awe-inspiring structures have not only captured the world's attention but have also significantly transformed transportation, trade, and tourism in their respective regions in India.

The Chenab Bridge, celebrated as the world's tallest rail bridge, epitomises India's engineering excellence and innovative spirit. Soaring majestically 359 meters above the gushing Chenab River, this architectural wonder commands global admiration. Its imposing stature not only links remote corners of

Kashmir but also proves India's unwavering commitment to conquering infrastructure challenges in rugged landscapes.

Chenab River is very important to India. Apart from this bridge, it also has several hydro-electric projects such as Ratle Hydroelectric Project, Salal Hydroelectric Power Station, Dul Hasti Hydroelectric Plant, etc.

Standing tall amidst the breathtaking valleys of Kashmir, the Chenab Bridge is a marvel of modern engineering. Its towering height and intricate design have captivated visitors worldwide, showcasing India's ability to undertake and accomplish monumental projects. The bridge's sheer magnitude serves as a testament to the ingenuity and technical prowess of

Indian engineers and construction teams.

The marvel

Beyond its structural grandeur, the Chenab Bridge plays a vital role in connecting isolated regions of Kashmir. Prior to its construction, these areas faced daunting geographical barriers, hindering access to essential services and economic opportunities. However, with the completion of the bridge, residents now enjoy improved connectivity, facilitating the flow of goods, services, and people across the region.

The Chenab Bridge represents India's dedication to infrastructure development in challenging terrains. Its construction in the rugged valleys of Kashmir demonstrates India's resolve to overcome geographical obstacles and expand connectivity to remote areas. The bridge epitomises India's vision for inclusive development, ensuring that even the most isolated communities have access to vital resources and opportunities.

Made of steel and concrete, the Chenab Bridge is an arch bridge, taller than the famous Eiffel Tower. It runs between Bakkal and Kauri in the Reasi district of the Jammu part of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory. The railway bridge forms a crucial link from Katra to Banihal. It is situated 1,178 feet above the riverbed and is part of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link (USBRL), a project worth INR 35,000 crore.

It is set to make commuting and transport of goods easier, boost tourism, and bring economic development to the region. The Chenab Bridge is 1,315-metre long and can withstand high wind speed up to 266 kmph. It is also designed to withstand earthquakes of India's highest intensity zone-V. The bridge was fully completed and inaugurated in August 2022.

Connecting the east

Located on the eastern frontier, the Bogibeel Bridge stands out as India's longest rail-road bridge, extending over the formidable Brahmaputra River in the state of Assam. Spanning a remarkable distance of 4.94 kilometers, this bridge has revolutionised connectivity between the northern and southern banks of the Brahmaputra, facilitating smooth movement of goods and people throughout the region.

The construction of the Bogibeel Bridge has heralded a new era of transportation efficiency and economic growth in Assam and the north-eastern states. By bridging the Brahmaputra River, it has significantly reduced travel time for commuters and enhanced accessibility to remote areas, thereby fostering improved regional integration and development.

Furthermore, the Bogibeel Bridge has opened up new vistas for economic expansion and trade in Assam and neighbouring states. Its strategic location and enhanced connectivity have facilitated the smoother flow of goods and commodities, thereby boosting trade activities and economic exchanges in the region.

The bridge has catalysed the development of infrastructure and logistics networks, laying the groundwork for sustained economic growth and prosperity in Assam and beyond. The combined road and rail bridge lies between Dhemaji district and Dibrugarh district.

The bridge is also India's first to comprise fully-welded steel-concrete support beams that can withstand earthquakes of magnitudes up to seven on the Richter Scale. In December 2018, during a huge gathering at Kareng Chapori located on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River, Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the first passenger train passing through the Bogibeel Bridge.

Speaking at the public meeting, the Prime Minister recalled the time when in May 2017, he had dedicated to the nation India's longest road bridge - the Bhupen Hazarika Bridge - at Sadia in Assam.

For the construction of this bridge, the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) supplied 35,400 metric tonnes of steel which is a little more than 50 per cent of the total steel supplied for its construction.

Sea of benefits

These bridge projects are not merely engineering marvels but also catalysts for economic growth and development. The Chenab Bridge and Bogibeel Bridge have enhanced transportation infrastructure, enabling faster and more efficient movement of goods and people across regions. This improved connectivity has bolstered trade and commerce, unlocking new opportunities for businesses and industries in remote areas.

With their impressive scale, innovative designs, and significant socio-economic impact, the Chenab Bridge and Bogibeel Bridge exemplify India's commitment to infrastructure development and its emergence as a global leader in engineering excellence. As these bridges continue to garner international attention, they serve as shining examples of India's potential to undertake and successfully execute ambitious infrastructure projects that benefit not only the nation but also the world at large.

The Chenab Bridge and Bogibeel Bridge have changed the lives of millions of residents in their respective regions in profound ways. In Kashmir, the Chenab Bridge has revolutionised connectivity in remote areas, providing residents with reliable transportation links to the rest of the country. This has facilitated the movement of people and goods, opening up new economic opportunities and improving the overall quality of life for residents.

Moreover, these bridges have spurred tourism by providing easier access to picturesque regions and cultural attractions. The Chenab Bridge, in particular, has become a sought-after travel destination, attracting visitors eager to witness its architectural grandeur and spectacular views. It is attracting visitors from around the world and the new influx of visitors has not only bolstered the local economy but has also created employment opportunities in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

Similarly, in Assam, the Bogibeel Bridge has significantly improved connectivity in the north-eastern states, overcoming natural barriers posed by the Brahmaputra River. This has encouraged movement of goods and services leading to strengthening of local economy.

In addition to their monumental engineering achievements, the Chenab Bridge and Bogibeel Bridge have also had significant socio-economic impacts on their respective regions. With the completion of the Chenab Bridge, residents now have easier access to healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and markets in other parts of the country.

Similarly, the Bogibeel Bridge has had a transformative impact on the north-eastern region of India, particularly in Assam. People now have improved access to markets, healthcare, etc. which has created new avenues for trade and commerce as well. It is also attracting tourists from all over boosting the travel and tourism industry.

Ruchi Verma is a media researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Revolutionising transportation

As the country witnesses unbridled urbanisation with an exponential population growth, it has been a daunting task, no less, to cope up with dismal road conditions and traffic snarl-ups. **Anushka Singh** says efforts are on to address this issue with Expressways paving the way for smoother and faster connectivity, observing India has witnessed a surge in expressway construction across various states and discusses their utility in transforming transportation.



The Kundli – Ghaziabad - Palwal Expressway, a 135 km long and six-lane wide expressway to ease congestion and pollution in the national capital region

India's rapid urbanisation and population growth have led to increasing challenges in transportation, including traffic congestion and poor road conditions. In response, the country has embarked on an ambitious journey of constructing expressways to revolutionise its transportation infrastructure.

With India's urban population expected to reach 600 million by 2031, the demand for efficient transportation infrastructure has never been higher. Poor road conditions and traffic congestion have become commonplace in major cities, hindering economic growth and affecting the quality of life for millions of people.

Expressways offer a solution to these challenges by providing faster, safer, and more reliable connectivity between urban centers. Expressways bring a plethora of benefits to commuters and the regional economy alike.

Firstly, they significantly reduce travel time, as exemplified

by the Mumbai-Pune Expressway. This 94-kilometer-long expressway has slashed travel time between Mumbai and Pune drastically, transforming the commuting experience for millions of people.

Moreover, expressways enhance road safety by separating high-speed traffic from local roads. Several expressways have reduced accidents and fatalities by providing a dedicated corridor for high-speed vehicles, ensuring safer travel for commuters.

A welcome surge

India has witnessed a surge in expressway construction across various states. The Eastern Peripheral Expressway or the Kundli – Ghaziabad - Palwal Expressway (KGP Expressway) in Delhi-NCR, a 135 km long and six-lane wide expressway, provides a bypass route for vehicles bypassing Delhi, easing congestion and pollution in the national capital region.

Furthermore, the Delhi-Mumbai Greenfield Expressway project is set to revolutionise logistics and transportation between India's two largest cities, boosting trade and commerce and driving economic growth. It is being developed with an eight-lane configuration with provision to expand to 12 lanes in the future combined with a design speed of 120 km/hr.

The Dwarka Expressway is set to connect Delhi's Dwarka (Shiv Murti in Mahipalpur) to Kherki Daula toll plaza in Gurgaon, to provide a better alternative to the people of Gurgaon travelling to New Delhi. Constructed at an approximate cost of INR 9,000 crore, the first-of-its-kind expressway in the country is an elevated eight-lane access-controlled.

The impact of expressways on the common man is immense. The improved connectivity and reduced travel times offered by expressways have made commuting more efficient and convenient. Expressways have enhanced economic mobility, facilitating easier access to employment opportunities and essential services for millions of people.

With their myriad benefits, including reduced travel time, enhanced safety, and improved connectivity, expressways are set to change the face of transport in India, driving economic growth and improving the overall quality of life for its citizens. As India continues to invest in infrastructure development, the expansion of expressways will remain a key priority, shaping the future of transportation in the country.

Economic development

The construction of expressways has had a profound impact on India's economic growth and development. These modern road networks have facilitated smoother movement of goods and services, leading to increased efficiency in logistics and supply chain management. Expressways like the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway are expected to catalyse economic development by providing seamless connectivity between major industrial and commercial hubs.

Additionally, expressways have stimulated investment in infrastructure and real estate development along their corridors. The Mumbai-Pune Expressway, for instance, has led to the emergence of new business hubs and residential complexes along its route. This has not only created employment opportunities but also fuelled economic growth in the surrounding areas.

Expressways have also contributed to the growth of the tourism industry by improving access to popular tourist destinations. The Yamuna Expressway, connecting Greater Noida with Agra, has boosted tourism in the region by providing faster and more convenient access to the Taj Mahal, one of India's most iconic landmarks.

Socio-economic impact

Expressways have also had a significant socio-economic impact on local communities along their routes. The development of expressways has led to improved access to education, healthcare, and other essential services for residents of rural and semi-urban areas. The Eastern Peripheral Expressway, for example, has enhanced connectivity to remote villages in Delhi-NCR, improving access to healthcare facilities and educational institutions.

Expressways have spurred employment generation through the construction and maintenance of these road networks. Expressway projects have created thousands of jobs in construction, engineering, and related sectors, providing livelihood opportunities for local communities.

The construction of expressways in India has ushered in a new era of transportation infrastructure, significantly improving connectivity, promoting economic growth, and enhancing the overall quality of life for citizens. With continued investment and expansion in expressway projects, India is poised to further accelerate its economic development and emerge as a global leader in sustainable transportation infrastructure.

Environmental considerations

While the benefits of expressways are undeniable, it's crucial to consider their environmental impact and ensure sustainability in their construction and operation. Expressway projects often involve large-scale land acquisition and may lead to deforestation and habitat destruction, posing significant environmental challenges.

To address these concerns, expressway projects in India are increasingly incorporating sustainable practices and environmental mitigation measures. For example, the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway project includes provisions for afforestation and biodiversity conservation along its route.

Furthermore, expressway authorities are exploring innovative solutions to minimise environmental degradation. The use of eco-friendly construction materials, such as recycled asphalt and concrete reduces the environmental footprint of expressway projects. Additionally, the integration of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels along expressway corridors, contributes to sustainability efforts and reduces carbon emissions.

Today, expressways are designed with features to mitigate their impact on wildlife and ecosystems. Wildlife crossings, such as underpasses and overpasses, are incorporated into expressway designs to facilitate the safe movement of animals and prevent habitat fragmentation.

Community engagement

Community engagement and consultation are integral components of expressway development to address concerns and ensure the well-being of local communities. Public hearings, stakeholder consultations, and environmental impact assessments are conducted to gather feedback and address community concerns regarding expressway projects.

Expressway authorities collaborate with local communities to implement socio-economic development initiatives. These initiatives may include skill development programmes, healthcare facilities, and infrastructure improvements in nearby villages and towns. The Mumbai-Pune Expressway project, for instance, initiated community development programmes to enhance the socio-economic well-being of local communities.

While expressways hold immense potential to transform India's transportation landscape and drive economic growth, it's essential to adopt a holistic approach that considers environmental sustainability and community well-being. Several new expressways will transform transportation and travel in India. The Bengaluru-Chennai expressway will be a 260-km-long way connecting the two major cities. It will be a 90 m wide, four-lane access-controlled expressway enabling speeds of up to 120 km/hr.

The 210-km long Delhi-Dehradun expressway beginning from Akshardham temple to Dehradun will reduce the travel time to half. The 594-km-long Ganga Expressway, a six-lane expandable to 8-lane project, implemented by the Uttar Pradesh Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) at an estimated cost of INR 36,230 crores will reduce the travel time between Delhi and Prayagraj to almost half. It will start at Bijauli village in Meerut and end at Judapur Dandu village of Prayagraj. Expressways are the ribbons of progress that crisscross our nation. These are not mere conduits of vehicular movement. By embracing eco-friendly practices, fostering community engagement, and implementing thoughtful mitigation measures, these infrastructure projects are transforming India.

Anushka Singh works with DraftCraft International as a Media Researcher and writes mostly on issues affecting the Fourth Estate. She likes reading contrarian literature and analysing sources of news.

Ports, airports, and more!

Vedika Jain explains how the expansion of airports and ports across India over the last decade has had a profound impact on the nation's connectivity and trade dynamics. Improved air connectivity has facilitated easier access to various regions within India, promoting tourism, business travel, and economic development. As major economic engines, they have emerged as a good augury for nation's trade and commerce growth.



The Sagarmala Project, India's biggest coastal project is aimed at promoting port-led development in the country by harnessing India's 7,500 km long coastline

In the ongoing efforts to revitalise and strengthen infrastructure development in the country to boost economic growth, the government of India has made well-planned and aggressive efforts for the 'expansion and modernisation of the Marine Sector' which is extremely crucial to trade and commerce.

Several new ports have been constructed or are underway as part of the Sagarmala Programme 'to promote port-led development in the country through harnessing India's 7,500 km long coastline on key international maritime trade routes.' These include Vadnavan (Maharashtra), Enayam (Tamil Nadu), Tajpur (West Bengal), Paradip Outer Harbour (Odisha), Sirkazhi (Tamil Nadu), Belekeri (Karnataka), etc.

Additionally, enhancing air connectivity has been at the forefront of infrastructure development even in remote areas to promote travel, tourism and business. For example, Sikkim's Pakyong Airport, nestled in the Himalayas, is a testament to engineering ingenuity and provides air connectivity to Sikkim, previously inaccessible by air, promoting tourism and development.

Developing and upgrading ports

In July 2015, the government of India launched the Sagarmala Programme under the Gol's Ministry of Shipping (Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterway), basically to enhance the performance of the logistics sector in the country. The main aim of the programme is to decrease the heavy logistics cost that comes with trade (EXIM i.e. Export-Import and domestic sector) using minimal investment in terms of infrastructure.

As part of the programme, potential opportunities to reduce the logistics cost have been identified to improve overall efficiency and increase exports competitiveness. The main five areas that have been identified to further this programme are: Port-led Industrialisation (industrial clusters, SEZ, power plants, etc.); Coastal Community Development (skill development, fisheries, tech centres, etc.); Coastal Shipping and IWT (coastal and cruise tourism, island development, inland waterways, Ro-Ro, etc.); Port Modernisation (new ports and ship repairs); and finally, Port Connectivity (through road,

(Continued on pg 30)



A New Daman Making Waves With World-Class Heritage

From its status as the footnote of history, Daman, in the west coast, has come a long way to script and rewrite its own narrative. Manu Shrivastava sketches a picture of the historical canvas of the scenic area swirling in golden beaches and with a culture – food and language included – that is uniquely its own. It is a swanky pocket that embodies a modern India and yet remains anchored in roots. It wears its heritage like a silken sari, vibrant and timeless. It invites you - a traveller, a seeker - to explore its timeless tale.

Text & photos : Manu Shrivastava



Daman Seafront

Daman is a coastal gem of India that has turned a new leaf. No longer confined to the sepia pages of its colonial history, it now blooms with vibrant hues, a canvas where cultures converge, and stories intertwine.

Sun-kissed beaches, their sands whispering secrets of bygone eras. Waves, like ancient sages, recite verses of resilience. Palms sway, their fronds brushing against the sky - a dance of freedom.

Once a footnote in the annals of history, Daman now paints its own narrative. The past lingers, but it no longer defines. Instead, it weaves itself into the fabric of the present - a melting pot of traditions seeped in 'modern' essence.

As you step onto its shores, you're greeted by aromas: spices mingling with salt, street food sizzling in pans and indigenous fish drying along the sun-kissed sand. Languages collide:

Gujarati, Marathi, Portuguese echo... each word a bridge between epochs.

Narrow lanes wind through the heart of the town, revealing glimpses of heritage homes - their intricately carved balconies, some adorned with bougainvillea, others in need of mending. Here, time hesitates, caught between old and new.

Oh ... and the seafront! Devka, Daman and Jampore ... where timid waves kiss the rocks, leaving salty love letters. The meandering coastal road, a ribbon of aspirations, stretches toward infinity. Footprints merge leaving imprints on the sands of progress.

Smart lighting illuminates the night, casting shadows of promise. Gardens bloom, their petals catching stardust. Food stalls offer sumptuous snacks and stories. Families gather, laughter echoing across the sea.



A view of the Coastal Road aka Namo Path

The ‘modern’ touch

Daman is the embodiment of a new India: modern, yes, but anchored in roots. It wears its heritage like a silken sari, vibrant and timeless. It invites you - a traveller, a seeker - to explore its timeless tale.

Bathed in sunlight, Daman witnessed a momentous occasion last year when Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated two remarkable projects to Daman - the NAMO (Nani Daman Marine Overview) Path and the Devka Seafront.

The air was charged with anticipation as dignitaries, locals, and tourists gathered to witness this historic event. He was accompanied by Administrator of Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu and Lakshadweep, Praful Patel.

The Prime Minister engaged in heartfelt conversations with the construction workers who had toiled tirelessly to bring these projects to life. Their sweat and dedication were etched into the very stones of the promenade. As the sun played hide-and-seek with the azure sea, the Prime Minister graciously posed for a photograph alongside the workers – a snapshot that would forever capture this moment of unity and progress.

Devka Seafront, stretching an impressive 5.45 km, stands as a testament to human ingenuity and vision. Built at a cost of approximately Rs 165 crores, it is not merely a concrete expanse but a living, breathing artery connecting the land and the sea.

There is something for everyone at the Devka Seafront, built in the most environment-friendly manner and, at the same time, keeping up with the demands of a modern-day traveller.



The famous lighthouse in Moti Daman



Nani Daman Beach

Hassle-free experience

One of the most prominent features of this seemingly ‘never-ending’ coastal road is Smart Lighting. As twilight descends, the seafront comes alive with a symphony of lights. The path, like a luminescent ribbon, guides wanderers into the night. Here, convenience meets aesthetics. Visitors can park their vehicles seamlessly, ensuring a hassle-free experience.

Amidst the salty breeze, lush green pockets invite weary souls to pause, reflect, and rejuvenate. The fragrance of blooming flowers mingles with the sea spray. Culinary delights from across the region find their home here. From piping hot vada pav to coconut water, the seafront caters to every palate.

There are plenty of recreational zones where children laugh and chase each other on the grassy lawns. Families gather for picnics, their laughter carried away by the wind. Here, futurists planning can be seen at its best with a provision for Tent Cities where one would wake up to the sound of waves, cocooned in luxury tents overlooking the sea.



Portuguese-style buildings in Moti Daman double up as a perfect backdrop for social media influencers

This is undoubtedly a one-of-its-kind coastal promenade in India attracting tourists from all over, boosting local economy. The seafront is being transformed into a world-class tourist destination, a hub for leisure and recreation activities, exploring the immense potential of the zone.

The swanky coastal road that stretches from Devka Beach in the north to Jampore Beach in the south boasts of state-of-the-art facilities, broad walkways, vista points, selfie spots, etc. and is increasingly becoming popular among young travellers, families and ... influencers!

Tourists can now just zip through the entire stretch in a matter of few minutes, while enjoying the sea breeze, local food and picturesque landscape of sandy shores flanked by vibrant fishing boats and fishermen lazing under the golden sun. Along the Daman coastline, it is common to see the local Tandels repairing their boats and nets, and fish being sun-dried on strings.

Endless places to visit

Situated on India's western coast, adjacent to the Arabian Sea, Daman is rich in history and heritage. This enclave serves as a part of the Union Territory (UT) of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. Despite its size, Daman attracts a significant number of tourists due to its tranquil beaches, breath-taking landscapes, rich architecture, and delicious food!

Daman was a former Portuguese colony and later became part of India as a Union Territory. Kolak River in the north and the Kalai River in the south separate Daman from Gujarat. The Daman Ganga River divides the town into two parts, namely Moti Daman and Nani Daman.

The zone is filled with remnants of Portuguese history, including churches, forts, bungalows, etc. A culturally vibrant town, Daman also features splendid temples, picturesque bridges and a variety of food options. Some of the popular tourist



Children enjoy horse-cart rides at Jampore Beach

spots include Nani Daman Fort, Moti Daman Fort, Devka Seafront, Jampore Beach, Nani Daman Jetty, Moti Daman Jetty, Church of Bom Jesus, etc.

BAPS Swaminarayan Temple, located on the banks of Daman Ganga River is another popular tourist destination for those visiting the zone. The intricately-carved pillars and domes of the temple are a vision and the spacious lush garden offer serenity to the spiritual visitor.

The beaches in Daman have undergone a welcome face-life in recent years. Devka, Jampore and Nani Daman beaches are thronged by tourists and locals throughout the year. The Jampore Beach, located five km from the Moti Daman Jetty, is a pristine, palm-fringed beach that attracts tourists seeking adventure activities and beach sports such as parasailing, camel and horse rides, etc.

Devka Beach, in contrast, emerges as an idyllic haven for families in pursuit of both amusement and tranquillity. Its appeal lies in the clean waters and abundance of amusement parks and resorts, making it an attractive choice for visitors of all ages, from the young to the elderly. The seemingly boundless shoreline provides a serene and uninterrupted experience, inviting relaxation and enjoyment.

Due to the ongoing development in the area and the construction of the coastal road, the Moti Daman jetty and the beach have undergone significant enhancements to cater to tourists. One can often see people jogging, socialising, and

children joyfully running along the sandy shoreline, with some even attempting to fly kites in the brisk winds. Young couples and influencers can be seen doing photo-shoots as well.

The newly-constructed coastal road has reduced travel time drastically within Daman and to nearby tourist places. On a trip to Daman, one can visit many other places of historical importance in the zone such as Udvada - the Parsi pilgrimage town and the home to the Atash Behram.

Food and forts

The quaint coastal enclave has gained acclaim for its delectable seafood, meticulously crafted with a distinctive medley of spices affectionately referred to as the “green gravy.” This culinary delight is abundantly available in local eateries. Among the preferred delicacies are succulent lobsters, flavourful fish, and tender crabs.

Notably, even vegetarian dishes prepared in the traditional green gravy have garnered popularity. In recent times, the town has witnessed a surge in the popularity of restaurants serving South Indian cuisine, as well as stalls offering a variety of local snacks and refreshing beverages.

The Moti Daman Fort stands as a living testament to resilience, culture, and the ebb and flow of empires - a canvas where shadows blend with whispers, and history breathes. The foundations of the fort were laid in AD 1559 and it stands as a testament to both architectural prowess and historical signifi-



Jampore Beach is a big hit among visitors

cance. Its completion, in AD 1581, coincided with the period when Daman existed as a Portuguese enclave. As you step within its formidable walls, encompassing an area of over 30,000 square meters, you embark on a journey through time, unravelling the intricate threads of Daman's past.

The structures within the confines are several Portuguese-style buildings including the Administrator's Secretariat, Government House, old lighthouse, convent school, government quarters, district library, gardens, district court, Daman Municipal Council, Cathedral of Bom Jesus, Dominican Monastery, Bocage House (also known as the poet house), etc.

The Moti Daman lighthouse near the fort is another popular tourist destination in Daman. One has to go to Moti Daman Jetty to reach the lighthouse via a newly-constructed beachfront road called the 'Ram Setu' that goes all the way to Jampore Beach.

The House of Bocage (The Poet House) is often overlooked by visitors when they visit the Moti Daman Fort. It is named after the Portuguese Neo-classical poet Manuel Maria Barbosa Du Bocage, who used the pen name Elmani Sadino. In 1786, Bocage was assigned to Goa as a Guarda-Marinha in the Portuguese Navy.



The Cross at St Jerome Fort in Nani Daman



Portuguese-style buildings in Moti Daman



Devka Eco Park

Initially, he was drawn to the Navy by the heroic narratives of the Portuguese empire in Asia, as portrayed in Portugal. However, his perception changed upon witnessing the reality of the Portuguese Empire in India. Disenchanted, he expressed his discontent through satirical sonnets aimed at the then-Governor and the Viceroy of Portuguese India. Consequently, he was advised to leave Goa. After departing, Bocage briefly served as a lieutenant in the infantry company in Daman in 1789 before escaping to Macau.

The forgotten history

Daman had a rich history before it became a Portuguese colony. In antiquity, Daman's historical roots extend back to the second century BC, when it formed an integral part of the Mauryan Empire during the reign of Emperor Ashoka. The district of Daman was a significant component of the region known as Lata, which constituted one of the seven divisions of the Aparant or Konkan Vishaya. This historical continuity persisted from the 2nd Century BC through the 13th Century AD.

Subsequently, with the waning influence of the Mauryan dynasty, the governance of the Daman district shifted to the Satavahana ruler Satkarni I by the close of the 2nd Century BC. As the sands of time flowed into the 1st Century AD, Daman came under the administration of the Kshaharatas, who held the position of provincial governors, or Kshatrapas, under the Kushana emperors.



Parsi pilgrimage town Udvada is a stone's throw away from Daman

Through the centuries, Daman witnessed the ebb and flow of dominion under the rule of diverse dynasties. These included the Satkarni, who drove away the Kshaharatas and ruled briefly before the Kshaharatas of Ujjain reconquered the district around AD 150. After the Kshatrapas, Daman was ruled by the Abhir Kings until AD 416, followed by the Traikutakas during the 5th Century AD.

Post the decline of the Kshaharatas, Daman fell under the rule of the Abhir Kings until AD 416. And, subsequently, during the fifth century AD, the Traikutakas assumed authority over the district.

In a dramatic turn of events, in a few years, the power of the Traikutaka was overthrown by the Vakataka king Harishena in AD 500. From AD 500 until AD 609, Daman was governed by the Kalachuris of Mahishmati, led by King Krishnaraja and his successors.

In AD 609, King Mangales of the Chalukyas of Badami defeated the last Kalachuri king, Budharaja. Over the next 800 years, Daman witnessed the reign of several Hindu kings and chieftains. Eventually, it succumbed to the Mughals. In 1465,



Tourist cycles available all along the Coastal Road in Daman



A market in Nani Daman

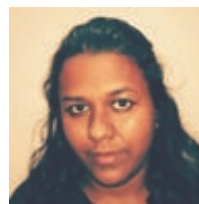
The Portuguese rule

In 1581, the ‘Siege of Daman’ took place in a military scuffle between the Shah of Gujarat and the Portuguese ensued in Daman. A Mughal army engaged the Portuguese forces to set up a siege but was forced to withdraw.

The Portuguese colonisation of Daman began when the Portuguese acquired the region from the Shah of Gujarat. In 1523, the Portuguese first noticed the port of Daman and subsequently launched several attacks.

It was only until 1559 that they gained full control through a treaty with Bahadur Shah of Gujarat. This marked the onset of Portuguese rule in Daman, which endured for over 400 years until 1961 when the Indian armed forces annexed the district, leading to the formation of the Union Territory.

Following liberation from Portuguese rule in 1961, Daman and Diu initially became part of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman, and Diu. However, in 1987, after Goa achieved statehood, Daman and Diu became a separate Union Territory. In January 2020, the Union Territories of Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli became one union territory.



Manu Shrivastava is a journalist and lawyer with DraftCraft International and Co-Convenor of #TheWomanSurvivor, #MeTooAtHome and #MeTooBeyondBorders initiatives.

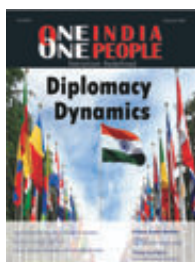
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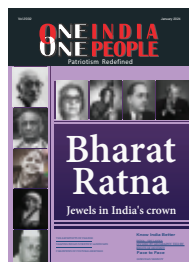
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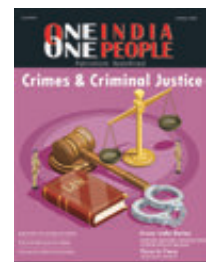
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“Dogs are communicative. If you listen, they will speak. They understand human emotions even better than we humans can comprehend.”

After holding a corporate job for over 25 years, Pune-based **Pushpa Yashwant Mohod**, 52 called it quits to start a pet hostel “Bow Wow Dog Boarding” with her partner in 2019. She finds time spent with her furry friends, fun and far more rewarding. In a tete-a-tete with **A. Radhakrishnan**, she points out to the profitability of the venture but also says it is a work that calls for lot of hard work and commitment. She has some useful tips of preparing pets for life in a kennel.

You were holding a corporate job. What made your start a pet boarding facility?

I worked in a corporate environment for over 25 years, mostly in the field of accounts and finance. I had no experience of playing with dogs, leave alone working with them. As a kid, having been bitten by a dog on two occasions; that fear always lurked. But a time came when I wanted to start my own venture. My colleague (then and partner now) in my last job was an ardent dog lover and a trainer in his younger days, with two pets of his own. Together we decided to start the *Bow Wow Dog Boarding* facility.

What services do you offer?

We desired a place where these ‘kids’ would enjoy their vacation while their ‘parents’ were away. *Bow Wow Dog Boarding* is a sprawling 8000 sq. feet home in Hinjewadi Phase 1, Pune for dogs only, housing 20 kennels. We also board pets on a day care basis when the ‘parents’ have guests over.

Our aim being to provide comfort and care to pets, we do offer any extra services. Our fees are primarily for boarding inclusive of daily meals. We also offer transport services for the convenience of our pets and their parents.

What makes a good dog boarding facility? Is it a profitable business?

As a business venture, it is surely profitable but entails a lot of hard work. Most importantly you cannot entrust the administration to your employees, as they cannot deliver what you can.



Pushpa Yashwant Mohod with a pet

The kennels should be large with lots of space for the pets to run around and play; pets should be provided with good and timely meals and above all pet owners and those working with the pets need to be compassionate. One has to be patient, loving and caring and understand their needs. A daunting task, but worth all the effort.

Is your team certified to work with pets?

Our core team comprises my partner and me. As mentioned earlier, he is a certified dog trainer. Our support staff comprises maids and helpers for cleaning only. They do not handle pets or take care of any pet needs. Walking the dogs, playing with them, feeding the dogs etc., is taken care of by only the core team.

Do you screen dogs that come and how do you handle aggressive dogs? Do you accommodate dogs with special needs?

We take the basic information about the pet from the parent itself,

in terms of whether they are human and pet friendly, their diet, their likes and dislikes etc. While we do get an honest feedback, sometimes the pet parents lie to us about their pet's behaviour. This is purely because their pet has been refused by other dog boarding facility on grounds of aggression.

In most cases, aggression is purely a self defence mechanism which is easy to handle. It's just a matter of time that the pet begins to trust us and the aggression is almost gone. The magic is food and the behaviour of the other pets towards us. He observes other pets around him and learns to trust us, at his own pace.

The other aggression is difficult to handle and is mostly seen in senior pets who have never been introduced to many humans. This makes our job difficult and sometimes even dangerous. In such cases, we inform the pet parent that the dog will not be off the leash at all times - inside and outside the kennel. This way it becomes easier for us to handle the pet, if things go south.

We do accommodate pets with special needs. Most kennels refuse to board female dogs during their heat period. Obviously, since the other males in the boarding become restless. We also accommodate old pets, which most kennels refuse, on medical grounds.

How do you prepare the dog for the kennel? The dog's daily itinerary?

No one can prepare a dog for the kennel stay - not even his owner. Dogs staying for the first time always have a very difficult time to adjust. They are in a new surrounding, with new pets, new people and trust does not come easily. First time pets are like kindergarten kids. They adjust with time.

Dogs boarding with us have their first break between 6.30 and 7.00 am where they relieve themselves. Breakfast is served between 7.30 and 8.30 am. Post their meal they are given a second short break. Between 9.30 am and 6.30 pm, our pets are outside their kennels – either playing with us or their new friends. The 'not so friendly' ones, are left alone to explore. Lunch is between 1.30 and 2.30 pm and dinner is served at 7.30 pm. Post dinner, individual pets go for their breaks and then retire into their kennels for the night.

How long does it take for a dog to adjust after boarding? Do dogs change after boarding? What should the owner expect when the dog returns home?

Best part about dogs, is that they adjust to their homes instantaneously. That's a place they trust; they feel comfortable about. They do change after boarding. A lot depends on their kennel experience. If it has not been a pleasant one, the parents will notice a behavioural change. Some may notice even diet changes - especially in puppies.

Once home, the owner should be prepared to shower more love, affection and attention to his pet. He has to make up for leaving his pet alone with strangers. Some pet parents may notice that their pets are extremely tired and sleep for extended hours. This is because at Bow Wow there is so much activity during the day that the pets do not want to miss on any action and they compromise their sleep.

Do dogs get stressed and lonely when boarded?

As community animals, dogs get extremely scared in new surroundings. They get easily intimidated by other pets especially in strange surroundings. Dogs do feel lonely and stressed as they miss their parents and their siblings. They tend to feel abandoned and don't know what awaits them. They have their own way of communicating and complaining.

Do dogs remember you after they return home?

Funny as it may sound, but yes they do remember us after they go home. Pets who stay with us for a long time - over 3 - 4 weeks, miss us. We have pet parents making video calls to us, asking us to talk to their pets. We have even had incidents, where the pet after being dropped home jumps back into our car, refusing to go home!

home!

What food do you provide for dogs? How is dog waste managed?

We do not have standardised meals for our pets. Each family has inculcated different eating habits and we try our best to meet those expectations.

Our basic meal is boiled chicken (breast boneless), boiled egg with rice. For our vegetarian kids, we provide boiled vegetables mainly consisting of potatoes, beans, pumpkin (on request), carrots, and sweet potatoes. Lunch during summer months is curd rice / buttermilk/ vanilla ice cream. During winter it's chicken broth with bhakri. We also provide dry dog food, if the pet has never been introduced to wet food. A waste disposal van picks up dog waste each morning.

Why are dogs lovable as pets? Do you speak to dogs?

I believe that dogs are communicative. If you listen, they will speak. They understand human emotions even better than we humans can comprehend. They pep you up and ask for attention in the most comic ways. They make you feel special by cuddling into your lap, just licking your face..... they are just so adorable.

We do speak to dogs and all our dogs are English speaking! They understand all our commands and abide by them too. It's so amazing that a child needs two years to understand and speak a language, but the dog understands your language within a month.

Have you had to face any dangerous situation? How do you deal with an emergency?

In this field of work, an emergency arises within a blink of the eye. Dogs are temperamental and you can never predict how each dog will react to the other during play and suddenly you have a situation on hand.

Till we are not sure about the temperament of the pet, we do not socialise them with other pets boarding with us. We have, till date, not faced an emergency or a situation which has been fatal – neither to our pets nor us.

Which are the types of dogs that come to you? Why do dogs dig holes?

Of the many breeds of dogs, the most common ones are Labrador, Golden Retriever, German Shepherd, Lhasa, Shihtzu, Husky, and our very own Indies. The Indies dig holes to hide their food in case of emergency. Some breeds do so in anxiety or extreme happiness. Most dogs dig holes in summer months to keep themselves cool.

Which do you prefer - your old corporate job or caring for dogs and why?

Of course I enjoy working with my furry kids. Corporate work is a thankless job and these kids thank me several times a day, in their own way. Working for them does not feel like a compulsion. With no stress, no work pressure, and no deadlines – it's pure fun. What more could I ask for?

Contact details:

Whatsapp number: 7757002577
Email id: pymohod71@gmail.com



A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet and short story writer.

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rail, pipelines, etc.).

As far as the progress is concerned, 171 projects of INR 11,000 crores have been sanctioned under the programme with funding support of INR 4,570 crores. Of these, 55 projects worth INR 3,400 crores have been completed while 68 projects worth INR 6,000 crores have been awarded and are under implementation and the rest are under different development phases.

These projects are encompassing different works and aspects of the programme, such as improving connectivity through infrastructure, ports' capacity enhancement, developing tourism jetties, establishing RO-RO transport, creating fishing harbours, skill development and capacity building of the coastal communities.

Crucial role in trade

India's maritime sector has also experienced substantial growth in the past decade, leading to the development and modernisation of ports across the country. With India's extensive coastline and strategic maritime location, ports play a crucial role in facilitating trade and commerce, both domestically and internationally.

The Jawaharlal Nehru Port aka Nhava Sheva Port or JNPT at Navi Mumbai, operated by the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA), is an important container handling Port that makes up for 50 per cent of the 'total containerised cargo volume across the major ports of India.' The Nhava Sheva Port is the largest container port in the country, among the top 100 container ports in the world, and situated in the East of Mumbai.

The JNPA was commissioned in 1989 and in a short span of time it graduated from being a bulk cargo terminal to a leading container port in India, now connected to more than 200 ports in the world. In June 2023, in a major feat, the JNPA played host to its longest-ever 399-metre-long and 54-metre-wide cargo ship sailing under the Panama flag and called MSC Hamburg.

The port authority is always upgrading and expanding the port infrastructure which is a continuous process with the aim of upgrading capacity of cost-effective integrated logistics solutions. The JNPA has also undertaken several 'Ease of Doing Business' initiatives including inter-terminal transfer system linking all terminals, Direct Port Delivery (DPD) services to facilitate quicker and cheaper delivery of import consignments, etc.

In June 2015, the JNPA signed an MoU with Maharashtra Maritime Board to develop Vadhvan Port in Maharashtra. The proposed port is situated near Maharashtra's Dahanu in Palghar District and at a distance of about 150 km from Mumbai. The port, once functional, will serve cargo movement from India's western and northern states. It will be developed as a green field port to handle the substantial increase in the traffic demand of major ports along India's western coast.

The container port is a nationally important project to be built at an estimated cost of INR 75,000 crore. It was conceived under the Sagarmala Programme and is a government of India initiative to bolster port-led development and the development of India's coastlines for furthering economic growth and trade. To meet demands of the transportation of large containers and bulk and crude vessels, the Vadhvan Port will be developed as a deep draught port as the harbour has the natural features to be developed in the desired manner.

Flying high

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has constantly

airport upgradation and modernisation conditional to the multitude of factors such as commercial viability, land availability, traffic demand, socio-economic factors, airlines conditions, interest of the airport operators, etc. Notably, the AAI in tandem with the airport operators are aiming to construct greenfield airports and new terminals and undertake strengthening of runways, modernisation and expansion of existing terminals, etc., by 2025, with an estimated investment of INR 98,000 crore.

The modernisation drive has focused on improving the overall passenger experience, with the incorporation of premium lounges, retail outlets, and dining options within the airport premises. These additions not only cater to the evolving preferences of modern travellers but also contribute to the airports' revenue streams, further consolidating their status as premier aviation hubs in the country.

Importantly, the modernisation and expansion of these airports have positioned them as major hubs for international travel and transit, significantly enhancing India's connectivity globally. With world-class facilities and infrastructure in place, these airports have become preferred destinations for airlines and passengers alike, facilitating seamless travel experiences and bolstering India's reputation as a global aviation hub.

The works undertaken at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, and Kempe Gowda International Airport underscore India's commitment to augmenting its aviation infrastructure. These airports have not only improved air connectivity within the country but have also elevated India's stature as a key player in the global aviation landscape, catering to the growing demands of both domestic and international travellers.

As part of the Regional Connectivity Scheme 'Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik' (UDAN), there are plans to develop 100 airports by 2024. The AAI has initiated construction of Greenfield Airports at Navi Mumbai in Maharashtra; at Karnataka's Vijayapura, Hassan and Shivamogga; at Gujarat's Dholera and Hirasar; at Bhogapuram in Andhra Pradesh; and more. At the same time, extensive upgradation and modernisation works are being carried out at several Brownfield Airports in India including at Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Lucknow, Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, etc.

The expansion of airports and ports across India over the last decade has had a profound impact on the nation's connectivity and trade dynamics. Improved air connectivity has facilitated easier access to various regions within India, promoting tourism, business travel, and economic development. Additionally, enhanced maritime infrastructure has bolstered India's trade competitiveness, enabling smoother movement of goods and fostering economic growth.

Vedika Jain is a legal researcher with www.thewomansurvivor.com – an initiative of DraftCraft International to protect and empower women by bringing on one platform the latest on rights and issues, strategic case studies, state initiatives and informed legal opinions.

Tourism, panacea for NE ills

*The region in throes of neglect and gripped by insurgency now looks up to a new future with a new tourism policy that could well bring it in the country's mainstream. **Subhasish Chakraborty** enlists the slew of measures to bring about transformation in the militancy-infested tribal hinterland.*



One of the Northeastern tribes in traditional attire celebrating their festival

From high mountain passes to the exotic tribal culture, the North East of India is truly stupendous in terms of grandeur and beauty. Unfortunately, the region remained scattered locations in the north and east. In recent years it has witnessed interest among growers with jackfruit festivals held across Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Goa and in the North East. Food start-ups that have fuelled has reignited interest in the much-ignored fruit.

Jackfruit gets its name from the Portuguese *jaca*, in turn derived from the Malayali *chakka*. Jackfruit has traditionally been viewed as a source of affordable sustenance, as it is easy to grow, is resistant to pests and drought, and has a large yield. The average jackfruit tree yields over a hundred fruits a year. Combined with its versatility as a fruit that lends itself to a variety of dishes — sweet and savoury, simple and special occasion — the jackfruit has long been an intrinsic part of Kerala and Bengali cuisine.

With food processing technologies becoming more accessible, and a growing demand for processed jackfruit snacks beyond India, jackfruit is now becoming an economically significant part of Kerala's food industry. In recognition of its special status, in 2018, the Kerala government designated jackfruit the official state fruit. The major jackfruit-growing states are Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar. But it is only Kerala which has given jackfruit its due with growers making handsome dividends.

Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society

Recently, I had a first-hand experience of the extent to which this brand of Tourism can percolate in winning the hearts of the most hardened of militants.

On a visit to the Manas National Park, a UNESCO world-heritage site, I had stayed at the Manas Jungle Camp. The Camp, the first of its kind in Manas is run by a local NGO —Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society. The eco-friendly cottages at the Camp were very comfortable, the food hygienic and the staff warm and friendly. Apart from providing quality jungle accommodation, which is infinitely more superior than the state government run Tourist Lodge, the Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society has been at the forefront of the revival of the National Park and has also undertaken the initiative of patrolling inside the park premises, helping self-help groups, encouraging local handicrafts etc., all of which has impressed the UNESCO World Heritage Commission.

Every morning we could see local village people, mostly belonging to the Bodo tribal community come to the Camp and undergo training on conservation. Presently there are around 200 volunteers who have registered with the Society and play a crucial role in preserving the local flora and fauna.

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Chaurasi Kutiya: A slice of history

*Drawing its name from the species that exist on this earth, this esoteric place tucked away in the mystic climes of Rishikesh and once a favourite haunt of celebrities, was a Transcendental Meditation hub. With the legacy of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi written all over it, the complex has acquired an aura of the Beatles who made it their Ashram. **Tuhina Banerjee** looks at its rejuvenated avtaar.*



Entrance to Chaurasi Kutiya



Residential accommodation for course participants

An eerie sense of quiet and enigma swamps you as you step into Chaurasi Kutiya -- the sprawling, expansive 15-acre estate tucked away in an idyllic forested area on a small hillock straddling the eastern banks of the meandering Ganga in Rishikesh. The place was once the hub of Transcendental Meditation (TM) and became the sought-after-place for celebrities -- mostly from the West -- in the late 1960s and 70s.

Chaurasi Kutiya (Chaurasi means 84 and Kutiya means hut) is a cluster of 84 dome-shaped huts or igloo-like enclosures built with sand, rocks and stones lugged from the holy river's banks. Each chamber represents a different classic Yoga posture and together, they represent the whole range of human life. Vedas, the ancient Indian religious text, say there are 84 lakh species that exist on the Earth and the soul takes the form of different species based on an individual's karma. Chaurasi Kutiya might have derived its name from this concept.

Each chamber in the hut has a sleeping area, a place for

meditation, stairs that lead to a small terrace, a place to keep one's luggage and a toilet as well.

Legacy of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

The complex today lies unassumingly as a legacy of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi -- famously known as the 'giggling guru' who was a student of Swami Brahmananda Saraswati -- the Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math. After completing his degree in Physics in 1942, Mahesh Yogi is believed to have wandered in the Himalayas for two years after Swami Brahmananda Saraswati passed away in 1953. He led a reclusive life in Uttarkashi.

It was in 1955 that Maharishi Yogi started introducing his Transcendental Meditation (TM) to India and the world. He began his first global tour in 1958, and imparted training to more than 40,000 TM teachers. More than five million people



The meditation huts

were taught the TM technique and many teaching centres, colleges, universities and schools were also founded by the Yogi to teach Transcendental Meditation.

In 1959, the Honolulu Star Bulletin wrote about him stating: “He has no money, he asks for nothing. His worldly possessions can be carried in one hand. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is on a world odyssey. He carries a message that he says will rid the world of all unhappiness and discontent.”

After travelling across the globe while propagating TM, he confined himself to his room and died in his sleep on February 5, 2008 at his residence in Vlodrop in the Netherlands.

Maharishi Yogi left a legacy of meditation that is both unique and easy to practice. He made it available to all and sundry and its tailor-made accessibility made it very popular among those who wanted true inner peace.

The Beatles Ashram

Today, the Chaurasi Kutiya complex – apart from the huts – is dotted with many dilapidated and rundown structures on the verge of becoming ruins and overrun by shrubs. Chaurasi Kutiya is also known as The Beatles’ Ashram. That’s because the famed band’s Fab Four – George Harrison, John Lennon, Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr – had an eventful sojourn – a kind of spiritual retreat – here in February 1968. And it was here that the popular



A graffiti of The Beatles inside the hall

Liverpool band spent the most prolific phase of their career – creating a treasure-trove of 48 songs, including ‘Dear Prudence’, ‘Mother Nature’s Son’, and ‘Back in the USSR’ – which went into their iconic The White Album – in just two months or even less. A burst of creativity, indeed!

The meditation sessions – mostly TM whose source lies in the Vedas and involves a mantra tailored for each individual according to his/her requirement – offered them the much-needed solace to create and also get over the shock death of their beloved manager Brian Epstein, apparently due to an accidental drug overdose in London on August 27, 1967. It was this dash of meditative energy – stimulating a relaxed and discerning state of mind and magical healing – which weaned them away from drugs and pressure of popularity while providing them a new perspective towards life and living – beyond the roaring chart success that they had achieved.

How and why they left – quite abruptly – after a brief stay is a matter for multiple conjectures, which will continue to remain so. However, one thing that will never be debated is the fact that Maharishi Yogi was a huge influencer in the illustrious band’s spiritual transformation and enlightenment and it was Chaurasi Kutiya which played a central role in the entire process of reconnecting them to their souls.

The New York Times and The Independent in their reports dwelt on the Maharishi’s influence on the Beatles, and



The Post Office which 'The Beatles' used to send and receive letters during their stay at the ashram

their journey to Rishikesh to meditate, which “steered them away from LSD and inspired them to write many new songs”. (George Harrison even learned to play the sitar here). And despite all the reported fissures and confusion over their relationship, both the Beatles’ and Maharishi reconciled in the end.

Harrison said in 1977, “All Maharishi ever gave me was good advice and the technique of meditation which is really wonderful. Maharishi was fantastic and I admire him for being able in spite of all the ridicule to just keep going.” Starr said, “I feel so blessed I met the Maharishi – he gave me a mantra that no one can take away, and I still use it.” McCartney and his daughter visited Maharishi in the Netherlands in 2007 while the Yogi’s terse response to all the misunderstanding was, “I could never be upset with the angels.”

After Yogi’s death, McCartney said, “Whilst I am deeply saddened by his passing, my memories of him will only be joyful ones. He was a great man who worked tirelessly for the people of the world and the cause of unity.”

The complex as it stands today

The serenity of Chaurasi Kutiya which was reclaimed by the government in 1999 and has been part of Rajaji National Tiger Reserve since 2003 after expiry of ashram’s lease in 1981, rubs off on you. As you take a brooding walk, you encounter a number of graffiti, Pop art, pictures of Maharishi and murals of the Beatles painted by artists on the walls of abandoned buildings that used to buzz with spiritual and musical activities around 56 years ago.

Doors and windows of most of these buildings are missing. But some corners do have traces of a life lost and forgotten, which evoke a haunting feeling that you can’t simply brush off. You feel an unheard voice calling out, some unseen eyes watching you – trying to grab your attention. But nothing of this is spooky; it’s plain intriguing.

The Printing Press where Maharishi’s publications saw the light of the day, the bungalow (Saptapuri complex) where the Fab Four stayed, the post office from where the Beatles sent and received letters (postcards), Maharishi’s modest residence with a basement which is fully dark as it’s abandoned, the Dhyapeeth, the lecture hall (Ved Bhavan) where the Maharishi addressed his disciples, the guest houses (Panchkuti) meant for international guests and dignitaries, the room where the birthday of George Harrison was celebrated, the massive kitchen which fed 500 inmates of the ashram, the huge hall where the Beatles’ meditated, composed music and chatted with friends, a three-

storey building with slanting pyramidal walls with a maze of rooms – and each room with an attached balcony – where students, teachers and course participants stayed...everything seems to have frozen in an obscure time. They have a mystical touch to it and speak volumes of a vibrant, glorious time gone by.

From neglect to revival

Raju Gusain, a journalist based in Dehradun, says, “Chaurasi Kutiya came under the control of the forest department in 1999. They locked the gate of the ashram and deployed two security guards. The department adopted a casual approach initially. Taking advantage of the situation, many miscreants used to get inside and take away valuables from the complex. A lot of things (in the buildings) were vandalised and plundered. And a major chunk of the heritage was lost forever.”

On 8 December 2015, it was after much persuasion from different quarters that the Uttarakhand government opened the complex to the public. In 2016, four renowned artists were invited to produce murals. In 2018 to mark 50 years of the Beatles’ visit to the place, a photo gallery showcasing their stay came up.

There are three halls. One hall showcases the essence of Transcendental Meditation and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s philosophy. The second hall has photos of celebrities who paid a visit to the ashram, Beatles being the cynosure, and the third hall gives you a sneak peek into the Rajaji Tiger Reserve and its inhabitants.

Gusain, who is also the India ambassador of The Beatles Story, the biggest museum of the band located in Liverpool, points out, “There are 22 rare photographs – mostly featuring those taken by two-time Emmy Award winning filmmaker Paul Saltzman – displayed here. Each photograph has a story to tell of the Beatles’ sojourn here.”

He adds, “In 2017, I had the honour of conducting a tour for The Beatles Story team to Rishikesh and Beatles Ashram. It was a memorable outing and I shared my stories with the team, who were finalising their exhibition to mark 50 years of Beatles arrival in India. I organise a heritage walk of the Chaurasi Kutiya for music lovers and Beatles fans on a regular basis.”

Gusain’s services are also availed of by the forest department. During the recent G20 summit, he guided dignitaries and took them on a tour of Chaurasi Kutiya. In 2023, the government said it was planning to develop it as an international heritage tourism destination. Saket Badola, director of Rajaji Tiger Reserve, says, “We have big plans to turn Chaurasi Kutiya into a major international tourist destination.”

Of late, there have been mounting calls to promote Chaurasi Kutiya as a world heritage site. These calls come against the backdrop of the forest department reportedly earning around Rs 1 crore a year from the visitors – the entry fee is Rs 150 for Indians and Rs 1200 for foreigners.

Vipin Sharma, managing director of– a tourist operator company – underlines, “The forest department needs to launch a major restoration plan for Chaurasi Kutiya or else a heritage, will die a slow death. It is already on the brink of a collapse, with no proper rejuvenation plan in place. The ticket price was hiked recently and now a foreign tourist has to pay Rs 1200 for entry into the ashram. This, I feel, is too high and it needs to be reduced. Raising ticket prices is not the right way to earn revenues to restore the place.” While many say restoration could give rise to commercialisation, others believe preserving a past is crucial to saving it.



The writer is a freelancer who specialises in lifestyle and wellness issues.

The big, versatile fruit!

Far removed from its asymmetric and unattractive form, the jackfruit has multi-nutritional benefits and has emerged as an integral element in many culinary delights. HIRAMAN writes an interesting essay on this fruit which because of high fibre content leads to low absorption of sugar, making it an ideal food for diabetics.



Jackfruit is packed with nutrition and holds appeal in both raw and ripe forms

It's big, heavy with spiky skin, fleshy but not juicy, with a dense, sweet taste and an almost sickly, sweet smell. That's jackfruit—growing in the Western Ghats, in the south, and at scattered locations in the north and east. In recent years it has witnessed interest among growers with jackfruit festivals held across Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Goa and in the North East. Food start-ups that have fuelled has reignited interest in the much-ignored fruit.

Jackfruit gets its name from the Portuguese *jaca*, in turn derived from the Malayali *chakka*. Jackfruit has traditionally been viewed as a source of affordable sustenance, as it is easy to grow, is resistant to pests and drought, and has a large yield. The average jackfruit tree yields over a hundred fruits a year. Combined with its versatility as a fruit that lends itself to a variety of dishes — sweet and savoury, simple and special occasion — the jackfruit has long been an intrinsic part of Kerala and Bengali cuisine.

With food processing technologies becoming more accessible, and a growing demand for processed jackfruit snacks beyond India, jackfruit is now becoming an economically

significant part of Kerala's food industry. In recognition of its special status, in 2018, the Kerala government designated jackfruit the official state fruit. The major jackfruit-growing states are Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar. But it is only Kerala which has given jackfruit its due with growers making handsome dividends.

Incidentally, the annual production of jackfruit in Kerala is 190.14 thousand tonnes. At the same time, the annual wastage of the state amounts to 35 crore jackfruits approximately.

While nations, namely Vietnam, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and the Philippines, gave pride of place to jackfruit, it continued to live in ignominy in the land of its birth. Though packed with nutrition and grown with the least human intervention, it was awaiting a change in perception.

Rich in carbohydrates, proteins, potassium, calcium, iron, and vitamins A, B, and C, jackfruit supplements other staple foods in times of scarcity in some regions. Jackfruit holds appeal both in its ripe and raw forms. It retains texture when

jackfruit is transformed into a range of everyday and special-occasion savoury dishes, each distinct in taste and texture.

Jack tree produces abundant fruit every year and is usually grown organically in homesteads and secondary forest regions without the application of additional care and farming practices.

As it has a delicious taste, flavour, colour, and excellent nutritional quality, it makes it more appropriate for processing and value addition. Jackfruit value-added products include chips, papads, pickles, ice cream, jelly, sweets, beverages like squash, nectar, wine, preserved flakes, etc. Additionally, jackfruit leaves, bark, inflorescence, seeds, and latex are used in traditional medicines.

Suitable value addition will make jackfruit available in the off-season and also provide additional income to farmers and processors.

The world's largest fruit is called by a variety of names – *kathal*, *panasa*, *phanas*, *jaca*, *nangka*, *kanoon*, *gach patha*, and *met* among others. Largely due to the odour of the ripe fruit and the traditional preference for tapioca, jackfruit never gained popularity in the country unlike in the Far Eastern nations.

It's only recently that agro-scientists have woken up to the potential of jackfruit. In 2012, the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, initiated a five-year-long study with the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru, which has led to the identification of 105 genotypes of jackfruit nationwide. It has identified 25 varieties from which it nurtures saplings and sells them through Krishi Vigyan Kendras and agriculture colleges.

The People's Service Society Palakkad, an NGO working among farmers has been involved in the processing, packaging and branding of jackfruit value-added products since 2013. Its 20-plus ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat products sold under the brand name Jaxo 100 include Jack Wonder Nut Cake, Jack Seed Flour, Dehydrated Ripe Jackfruit and others.

In Kerala, earlier a fruit would fetch around ₹ 30 but now a grower can easily demand between ₹ 100 to ₹ 150 per fruit.

(Contd from pg 30)

It is largely due to the pioneering role played by organisations like them and the cooperation of the Forest Department that revival of Manas National Park was possible. Tourism can play the role of a catalyst, in bringing disgruntled militants under the purview of development and offering them a new lease of life.

Points to be considered while promoting tourism

Now that the Tourism juggernaut in the North East has started rolling, a few points need to be considered. First is the integration of all the State Tourism organisations under the ambit of one exclusive Tourism umbrella and the creation of a North East Tourism Board. Such a board with the full financial backing of the Central government would be far more beneficial in promoting the entire region from a single platform rather than the dissipated efforts of each state.

Second, the geographic and ethnic landscape of the North East is unique in itself and instead of attracting mass tourism, the effort should be to promote niche tourism products like - (1)Anthropological Tourism (2)Tribal Tourism (3)Folklore Tourism (4)Mountain Tourism (5)Handicrafts Tourism (6)Ethnic Tourism (7)Tea Tourism

Third, the government should give priority to revive the Raj-era Golf Courses that are ideally nestled in the midst of Tea Gardens. Integrating the Golf Courses with heritage Raj-era Tea Garden Bungalows will create a platform to lure high spending international tourists.

Fourth, for tourism to be successful in the North East, the

jackfruit, and jackfruit seed flour. His clients include Kerala Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, Joy Ice Creams, Olio Bakers, Lazza Ice Creams, and Jumbo Foods. The company promotes the planting of jackfruit trees in households with an offer of a buy-back guarantee.

Now, imagine biryani, masala dosa, galouti kabab, kathi roll, panna cotta, and payasam from dehydrated jackfruit! That was the image change ushered in by James Jacob, formerly director (executive engagement) of Microsoft in India, and chief executive officer of Jackfruit 365.

Mathew freeze-dried the fruit, thus prolonging its availability, and went on to convince leading chefs of Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Chennai to make lip-smacking delicacies – enough for the national press, including the Discovery Channel, to sing praises about the fruit's culinary avatars.

While researching the fruit and its consumers, Jacob found that in many instances, jackfruit, when used instead of rice or wheat, reversed diabetes. A recent study by Sydney University's Glycaemic Index Research Service mentions that the glycemic load and carbohydrate content are the lowest in unripe jackfruit compared to rice and wheat. Its high fibre content leads to low absorption of sugar, making it an ideal food for diabetics. Mathew's freeze-dried unripe jackfruit powder which is added to wheat flour to make chapattis has found a dedicated following among diabetics all over India.

Aman Chhabra of 'Kathalfy' is among the handful who have brought Jackfruit back to Indian kitchens in new avatars creating a range of ready-to-eat products. His startup currently offers 13 varieties of ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook jackfruit items — from jackfruit makhani, jackfruit tikka masala, jackfruit Malabar curry, jackfruit Lucknowi kheema to products like seed flour, pickles, pancake mix, vacuum fried chips and even chocolates!

Hiraman is a freelance writer and a weekend farmer.

need for a new age PR plan aimed at creating and maintaining a positive image for a destination.

Last but not the least, proper identification of tribes for intensive exposure in terms of tourism wherein their unique festivals and fairs are highlighted needs to be chalked out.

The road ahead

In sum, a region having a fabulous culture, heritage and tradition, great places of pilgrimages, rich flora and fauna, mesmerising wildlife, exotic hills and mountains, gorgeous rivers and above all, an extremely hospitable set of people cannot be kept in hibernation for too long. But how soon this turnaround is achieved will depend upon the pace at which the progressive reforms are implemented. The sooner the mandarins of North East India's tourism industry declare it as a "Special Interest Tourist Zone" the better it is for tourism to flourish in this last remaining ecological hotspot of India.

However, one needs to bear in mind what the tourists need is not luxury, but real and immersive experiences during their stay. The demand is for clean and pleasant surroundings, usually at reasonable rates which the region does have in abundance. There is hope that Tourism will play the role of a harbinger of peace and stability in the North East.



Subhasish Chakraborty is a travel journalist and specialises on India's North East and the Himalayas, promoting responsible travel and indigenous/ tribal tourism.

JAYANTA MAHAPATRA (1928-2023)

Poetic perspective spurred by physics

An accomplished Indian English poet and litterateur, Jayanta Mahapatra was born into a well-known Christian family in Cuttack, Odisha. His M.Sc. in physics from Patna University in Bihar preceded his teaching career, from 1949 in several Odisha government colleges. In 1986, he retired from his government position as the Reader in Physics and superannuated at Ravenshaw University.

Although interested in science and mathematics, he went on to subtly transform Indian-English poetry. He began his writing career in the late 60s. He captured the richness of Odia life in his evocative everyday descriptions. His poetic perspective was informed by physics. His distinct poetry style was characterised by an abundance of words.

Sensitive, he explored a wide range of emotions, including men/women relationships. They also showed the grief of childhood alienation from his mother. The term shadow he used, conjured up images of a ghost or of darkness. His connection to myths and legends was a recurring theme.

He was one of three poets with A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy, who established the groundwork for Indian English poetry. His dual work as a poet and translator produced a diverse vocabulary that defied the Bombay-created canon of Indian English poetry. Many publishers initially rejected his work, but being widely acknowledged late in life helped establish his own peaceful, serene poetic voice.

After his first popular collection 'Swayamvara and Other Poems' in 1971 he never looked back. He then catapulted to the top of the writing world with his book 'Close the Sky Ten by Ten'. Of the 27 books of poems he authored, seven were in Odia and the rest in English. His poetry volumes include Relationship, Bare Face, Shadow Space, Indian Summer and Hunger. His poems also appeared in prestigious poetry anthologies.

Besides poetry, he experimented widely with myriad forms of prose, which included Green Gardener, an anthology of short stories and Door of Paper: Essay and Memoirs. Mahapatra's translations from Odia into English, were published in the bi-monthly literary magazine Indian Literature. He was also a talented writer of short stories, a tireless

translator, and an exceptional editor. For decades he edited the poetry section of the Telegraph magazine, as well as the literary journals Chandrabhaga and Lipi). Mahapatra became the first ever writer in English language to have won the Sahitya Akademi award for his book 'Relationships'. He was also conferred the Jacob Glatstein memorial award by Poetry magazine, Chicago; the Allen Tate Poetry Prize for 2009 from the Sewanee Review; the SAARC Literary Award, New Delhi, 2009, and the Tata Literature Lifetime Achievement Award. He got an honorary doctorate from the Ravenshaw University in 2009. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2009, which he returned to protest against "the rising intolerance in India."

He was protective of his books and his repeated desire to reread the same books showed his ambition to transform real-world time into a mythological realm. He was as silent as a stone after the passing of his wife and son, although at midnight the stone would occasionally whisper poetic sentences. His spirit had moved to a new place due to his loneliness. His mental serenity was not a prelude to a storm, but rather the knowledge of a fakir that embodied all that made him a poet.

Mahapatra seemed to have premonition of death. At the age of 94, he succumbed to pneumonia in Cuttack. Despite being a third-generation Christian, he was cremated with full State honours at his request.

"I have no message to give except a smile," he once declared. And we all know that a smile knows no boundaries.



A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet and short story writer.

AMEEN SAYANI (1932-2024)

Ebullient voice of a harmonious India

Ameen Sayani was an iconic Indian radio announcer and radio jockey.

Born into an elite multilingual political Gujarati Muslim Khoja Ismailia family in Bombay, he spoke impeccable Hindi and English. His style had a lot of 'adab' (refinement). Immaculately dressed, utterly charming and incredibly humble, Radio was everything to him.

For a decade, he was an English-language presenter for All India Radio, Bombay, thanks to his broadcaster brother Hamid. His audition later for AIR's Hindi service was rejected because of a slight Gujarati accent.

Ameen's journey to radio superstardom began not on AIR, but on neighbouring Radio Ceylon. B.V. Keskar, the first I & B minister and a high-minded purist, in 1952, banned Hindi language film songs altogether calling their lyrics irrational, vulgar, westernised and a threat to Indian classical music. This upset film producers and record companies.

Daniel Molina, an American businessman engaged Hamid to run his Ceylon radio operations. His brother Ameen was hired to host Binaca Geetmala (garland of songs), a weekly countdown show of Bollywood songs, sponsored by Swedish company Ciba's toothpaste brand Binaca, later rebranded Cibaca.

The brothers would record the show at their Bombay studio and send magnetic tapes by plane to Radio Ceylon, circumventing Indian government's jurisdiction. Bollywood songs were thus elevated to a popular art form.

Twenty-year-old Ameen Sayani's cheery, cheeky greeting "Namaste behno aur bhaiyon, main aapka dost Ameen Sayani bol raha hoon" coasted on airwaves into countless homes every Wednesday on Radio Ceylon (1952 to 1988) and later over Vividh Bharati (AIR) (1989 to 1994), a total of over 42 years. His fresh, joyous style, his lilting note of defiance and reversal of the traditional greeting; and his pet phrases – "behnon aur bhaiyon and aur ab agli padaan par" became wildly popular. His voice was different from the restrained style of broadcasting prevalent those days. He conjured the image of a sincere friend speaking directly to each listener through their radio set.

His unique style was actually developed as a result of the poor acoustics and limitations of his studio. He had to speak

over the street noise that would seep into the studio while recording.

The show's format was simple. Based on his listeners' favourite songs, ranking and record sales, he would introduce each song with the name of the writer, composer, and singer, and narrate an anecdote about them, their struggles and dedication. He would then play 16 Hindi film songs in ascending order of popularity, the final one being introduced with a bugle, or in his words, with a Bigul. At its peak, the show had about 400 radio clubs. In 1994, video killed the radio star and the enormous popularity of countdown shows on satellite channels and song compilation shows on Doordarshan, saw Geetmala being switched off.

His other long running radio shows include S. Kumar's Ka Filmi Muqaddama and Filmi Mulaqaat; Saridon Ke Saathi; Bournvita Quiz Contest (English which he took over after Hamid's death); Shalimar Superlac Jodi; a radio series Swanaash, based on actual HIV/AIDS; and an unusual retrospective of his flagship radio show Geetmala on CDs called Geetmala Ki Chhaon Mein.

Ameen also graced the silver screen with his presence, appearing in cameo roles, often as an announcer. The Limca Book of Records credits him in a six decade career with over 54,000 radio programmes and 19,000 spots/jingles since 1951. Among his awards include Padma Shri award (2009), the Hindi Ratna Puraskar 2007; the Living Legend Award (2006); Golden Abby, Bombay (2000); Hall of Fame Award (1993); Person of the Year Award (1992); etc.

Frail and with delicate memory, towards the end, Ameen declined to meet people, busy writing his memoirs, but occasionally recorded his captivating voice. Ameen died of a heart attack in Mumbai aged 91, survived by his son Rajil. The popular voice fell silent one final time.



A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet and short story writer.

CAPTAIN SHUBHAM GUPTA SM (1997-2023)

The hero of Rajouri encounter

Captain Shubham Gupta hailed from Taj Ganj area of Agra in Uttar Pradesh and was born on 7 October 1997. Son of Pushpa Devi and Basant Kumar Gupta, Capt. Shubham Gupta had a younger brother Rishabh Gupta. Even as a young boy, Shubham exhibited qualities of courage, discipline, and a strong sense of duty.

He completed his schooling at St. Georges Inter College, Agra, and thereafter, got selected to join the Army in 2015 at the age of 17. He got selected to join the Army through TES (Technical Entry Scheme), after passing the competitive examination. In the year 2018, he passed out of Officers' Training Academy (OTA) Gaya, (Located en route from Gaya to Bodhgaya, about seven kilometres from Gaya railway station.

After years of perseverance and dedication, Capt. Shubham Gupta proudly donned the olive-green uniform in 2018, marking the beginning of his remarkable military career. He was commissioned as a Lieutenant into the Corps of Signals, an important arm that provides communication to Indian army during war and peace. His first posting was in Udhampur.

Driven by his adventurous spirit, Capt. Shubham volunteered for the elite 9 Para (SF), a unit renowned for its gallantry and daring commando operations. The Parachute Regiment, is revered as one of the most elite units of the Indian Army. His journey to becoming a member of the esteemed regiment was filled with challenges and rigorous training.

As a member of this prestigious regiment, he underwent specialised training in various combat techniques, including airborne operations, counter terrorism, unconventional warfare. His unit was deployed in the Rajouri sector of Jammu and Kashmir, operating under the operational control of the XVI Corps of the Indian Army.

In a targeted intelligence-based operation initiated by the joint teams of 9th Battalion Para (SF), 63rd Battalion Rashtriya Rifles and Jammu and Kashmir Police on 19 November 2023, the Kalakote Area within Gulabgarh forest in Rajouri District was cordoned and a combing operation initiated.

The encounter broke out between terrorists and joint

forces of the Army and the Jammu and Kashmir Police in the Bajimaal area of Dharmsal following the cordon-and-search operation, the police said.

In the dense forests of Rajouri district on 22 November 2023, terrorists opened fire, leading to a fierce gun battle between the forces and the terrorists, resulting in injuries to the latter. Capt. Shubham bravely led his troops. Despite the danger, he pressed forward, engaging the terrorists who were holed up in a temporary thatched roof mud house.

In the ensuing fight, Capt. Subham Gupta sustained bullet wounds and was grievously injured. The 27-year-old officer had displayed highest ethos of the Indian Army during his last moments and was martyred in the intense encounter with the terrorist. Captain Shubham Gupta, a valiant and gritty officer, made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our nation. His unwavering dedication to duty and commendable gallantry will forever be remembered.

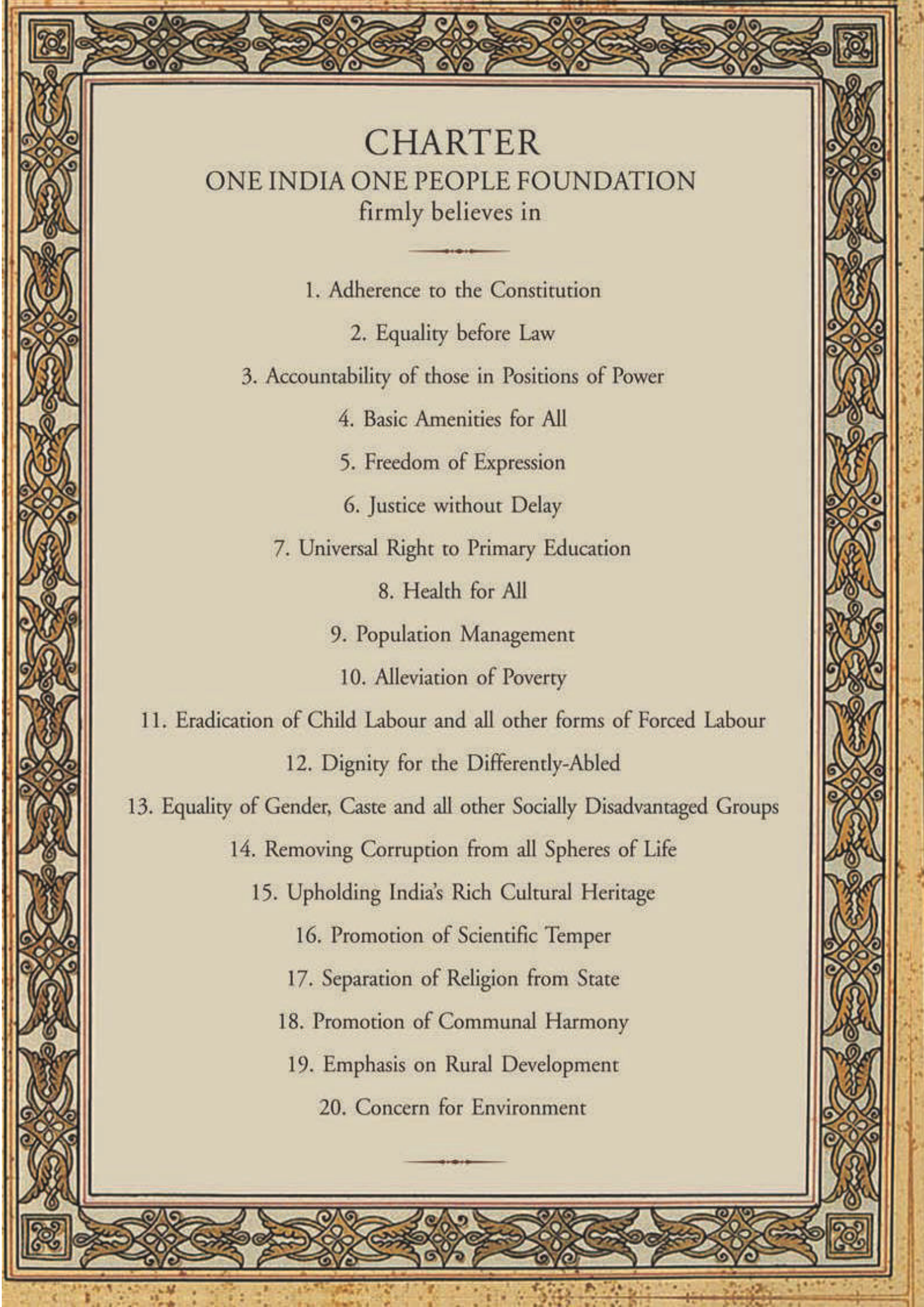
Posthumously, he Gupta was awarded the Sena Medal on 26 January, 2024, in recognition of his exceptional courage and supreme sacrifice.

His funeral was held with full state honours, attended by officers from the Army, district administration, and grieving family members.

The Basai metro station in Agra has been renamed as 'Shahid Captain Shubham Gupta Metro Station' on 2 March 2024 to honour the supreme sacrifice of Captain Shubham Gupta. His father Basant Gupta and family expressed their gratitude and thanked the Uttar Pradesh government for bestowing this honour upon their brave son. On the occasion, Basant Gupta who is District Government Counsel (Crime) at the civil court in Agra said, "My son has made me proud. He was always eager to do something big for country and did so while sacrificing his life for his uniform."



Contributed by Renu Prakash from the data bank of Late Brig. Suresh Chandra Sharma.



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 2. Equality before Law
 3. Accountability of those in Positions of Power
 4. Basic Amenities for All
 5. Freedom of Expression
 6. Justice without Delay
 7. Universal Right to Primary Education
 8. Health for All
 9. Population Management
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 11. Eradication of Child Labour and all other forms of Forced Labour
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 16. Promotion of Scientific Temper
 17. Separation of Religion from State
 18. Promotion of Communal Harmony
 19. Emphasis on Rural Development
 20. Concern for Environment
-

WHO AM I?



Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I the President of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Prime Minister of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?

Am I a supporter of any 'ism' first or an Indian first?

Am I a white-collar/blue collar worker first or an Indian first?

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Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor
(October 9th, 1930 – February 23rd, 2007)

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