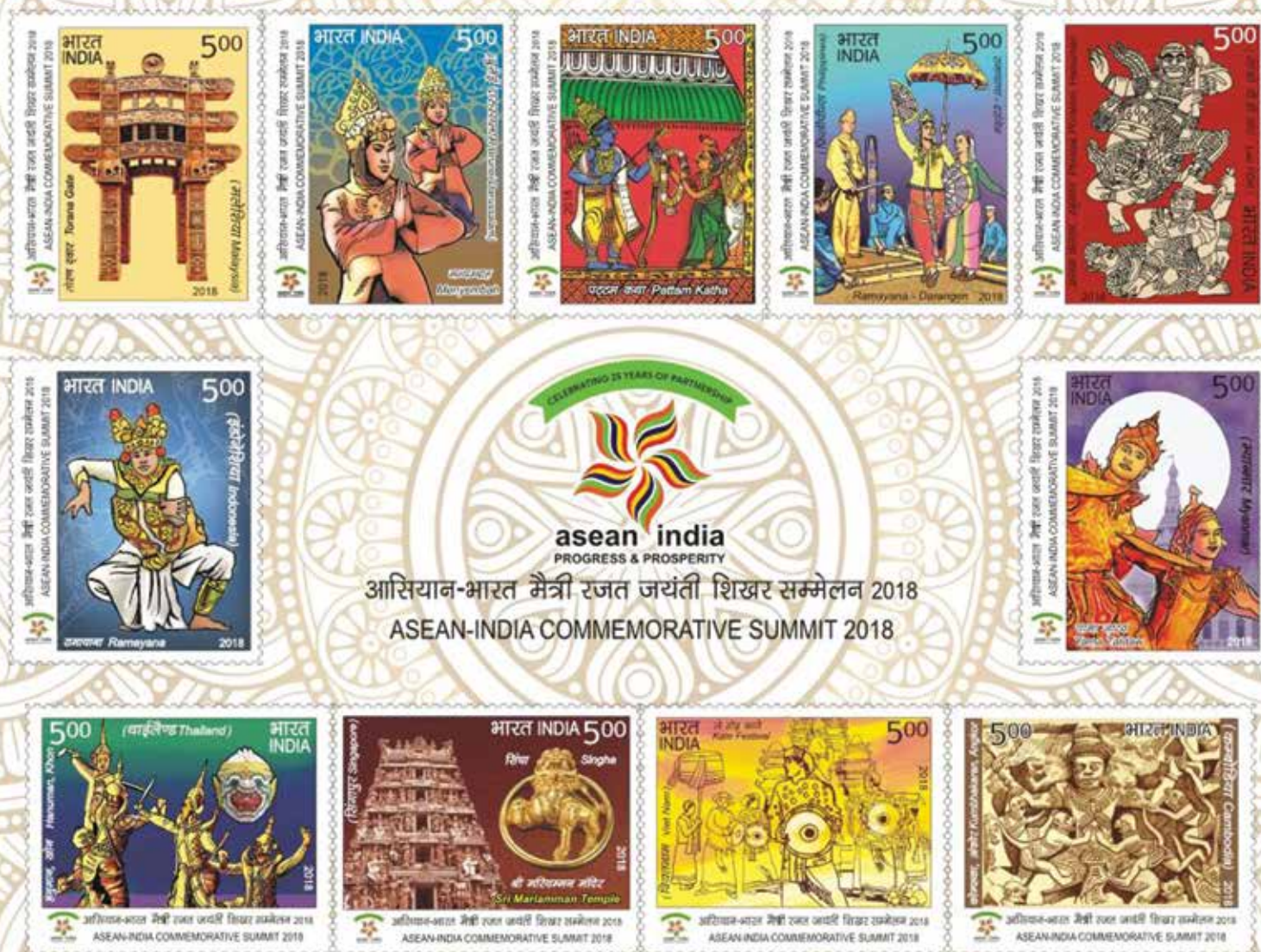


India Leaves its Stamp on ASEAN



The Soft Launch of the INDO-PACIFIC Era?



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INDIA AND ASEAN ON THE CUSP OF A NEW ERA



Nomita Dhar
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

SHIKHAR or peak comes at the time when two specific events mark the start of what some have termed as the 'Indo-Pacific Era.' Two events take centre stage - showcased as the cover stories of this inaugural issue of Shikhar magazine: The **India-ASEAN Pravasi Bharatiya Divas**, held at Singapore's iconic Marina Bay Sands, from 6th to 7th January 2018. Three weeks later this was followed up by the gathering of all 10 ASEAN heads of state at India's 69th **Republic Day** celebrations, held in New Delhi. India has awakened and is alert to the developments and importance of this region. This is reflected in the giant strides being taken to stoke the spirit of cooperation, both in words and deeds, between the Indian subcontinent and the ASEAN region. The seeds were planted centuries ago and in contemporary times the connection has remained strong thanks to the large (and prosperous) Indian diaspora.

Since 1994, Sun Media has been in constant contact with the diaspora and Indian-interest stakeholders, by bringing out publications for the Indian embassies in Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Australia and even Russia! We were also deeply involved in promoting Bollywood festivals and investment conferences, apart from vigorously pushing the envelope for Indian tourism, here in Singapore and in the region. It seems natural for us to take another step closer to the diaspora by launching a magazine that profiles the stories and the many laudable achievements of people and organisations who have scaled the peak. They are an incredible resource of talent, expertise and experience who are willing to share with everyone. For this first issue, we asked them about the theme of India and ASEAN. They shared their stories and views: **Piyush Gupta** has created a beachhead for Singapore's leading bank in India; **Kishore Mahbubani** offers laser sharp logic for the rise of India as an economic superpower; **Ong Keng Yong**, diplomat and former Secretary General of ASEAN weighs in with his insights and, finally, former WTO Chairman **K. Kesapany**, does not mince words when it comes to working with India.

We are very fortunate to gain the insights of these thinkers, movers and shakers from the academic, government and commercial worlds in our inaugural issue! Without exception, all of them have given a thumbs up on the journey that lies ahead.

Shikhar is also about the promise and opportunities that are offered by India. You will find it as an invigorating destination for business, leisure, health and spiritual pursuits. Can you imagine Singapore's **Ascendas Singbridge** will be building a brand new Indian capital? India, you will discover with delight, can truly inspire incredible peaks!

Nomita Dhar
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

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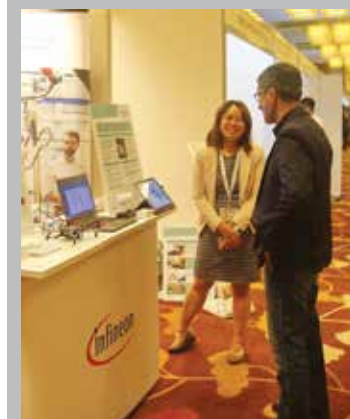
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JAWED ASHRAF: PBD's 'Ancient Route,



(Above, l to r): PBD opening ceremony - Mr Nitin Gadkari (India's Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Shipping & Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation), Mr S Iswaran (Singapore's Minister for Trade & Industry (Industry)), Tun S Samy Vellu (Special Envoy (Minister Rank) to India & South Asia on Infrastructure at Prime Minister's Office), Mr Jawed Ashraf (High Commissioner of India to Singapore) and Mr Gopinath Pillai, Ambassador-at-Large & Chairman of Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore).



(Photo group above): In conjunction with the PBD, InSpReneur attracted 25 exhibitors and invited more than 250 startups from Singapore and India and 60 investors

(Photo group above): There was also an active arts and wellness programme with art exhibitions, talks and demonstrations on yoga on the fourth level of the Marina Bay Sands Convention Centre

New Journey' of a Common Destiny

Singapore is a window to the heritage of the timeless ties between India and South Asia. It is the hub of progress for the past 25 years and the path towards the extraordinary journey that lies ahead. The Indian Diaspora bred in diversity and steeped in dynamism is its expression and the PBD's theme "Ancient Route, New Journey" is a motif for our connected histories, common destiny and collective endeavours.

The PBD is usually an event to celebrate our diaspora to deepen our economic links with India. But this one is different. As our External Affairs Minister said it should also be a platform to advance ASEAN-India ties and invest the huge wealth of diaspora talent for the benefit of India and ASEAN. The PBD demonstrates the breadth and diversity of the engagements of hearts, minds, opportunities between India and Southeast Asia.

We are profoundly honoured and delighted to have with us my minister Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, a people's minister and a resolute voice of compassion and humanity in the world. She has completely redefined the use of social media in our engagement with the diaspora. She has transformed the face of Indian diplomacy across the world and she has placed special emphasis on reclaiming the shared heritage of India and Southeast Asia for the sake of our common future. And as she has told us often Asia's rise and its place in the world will be incomplete without a prosperous India and a prosperous Southeast Asia working together to advance peace and cooperation in the region.

**- Excerpts from HE Jawed Ashraf,
High Commissioner of India,
Singapore welcome address to
Pravasi Bharatiya Divas
Singapore delegates on
7th January 2018**



BILATERAL TIES



(Top row): Smt Sushma Sawaraj opened the PBD's second day session with Guest of Honour, Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and (2nd row, far right) later with Mr Teo Chee Hean at the Gala Dinner that night.



Message from India's **MEA** at Singapore **PBD**

India will work on greater connectivity to build on current ties



With each Southeast Asian country India has grown political, economic, defence and cultural relations. And growing connectivity has reinforced proximity. Today 16 Indian cities are connected to Singapore. A highway project linking India to Thailand is making progress. We are bound to extend this further to connect India with other ASEAN countries. Our plans with the ASEAN region are among the most ambitious of any region. Our partnership in regional institutions including the East Asia Summit helps advance peace and stability in the region.

The strength of the partnership and of India's engagement in the region lies in the clarity of the principles that we share. We believe that when all nations adhere to international rules and norms, when we conduct relations on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect, our nations feel secure and our economies prosper.

- Smt Sushma Swaraj, in her opening address at Singapore's Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 6th January 2018

For the **First** Time, A Truly **Historic** Moment

ASEAN joins the Indian people on the country's 69th Republic Day celebrations



The President, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi and other dignitaries, at Rajpath, on the occasion of the 69th Republic Day Parade 2018 in New Delhi 26 January 2018

The talking point of this year's Republic Day celebrations on January 26, 2018, was the unprecedented move of the Modi government to invite 10 Chief Guests—all of them leaders of the ASEAN nations. Never before in the history of Independent India has such a move been made by the government. These special invitees are the heads of state of the 10 nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region comprising Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Brunei. ASEAN as a region which is becoming increasingly important for India's pursuit of its Act East Policy, for which the recently concluded ASEAN-Pravasi Bhartiya Divas celebrations in Singapore was 'an important curtain raiser and reaffirmation' of its significance and India's strategic positioning of itself as a major power in the region.

What's important about the ASEAN leaders attending the event is that ASEAN completes 50 years of formation and that this year completes India's 25 years of partnership with the grouping. With all ten heads of the ASEAN nations agreeing to come is also in a way indicative of the importance India is seen as a major player in the East. In his observations in his edit piece in The Times of India, a day after Republic Day Prof. Kanti Bajpai, Director, Centre of Asia and Globalisation, Singapore, notes that unlike China, Southeast Asian countries do not have a problem with India's rise, nor does the region harm India. "They can do sensible and mutually beneficial things together. Asean's coming to Republic Day," says Prof Bajpai, "symbolizes that perfectly."

THE ASEAN - INDIA CONNECTION

“India’s “Act East policy” reinforces our ancient links with Southeast Asia through enhanced political, security, economic and cultural ties. ...We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with ASEAN in pursuit of a rules-based regional architecture that is open, inclusive, balanced and equitable.”

- President Shri Ram Nath Kovind



The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi and other dignitaries, with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong beside him, delivered the ASEAN-India's Opening Remarks in Singapore's capacity as the ASEAN Chair for 2018 and the Co-Chair for the Plenary Session.



The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi with the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Hsien Loong, at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi on 25 January 2018

Your collective presence here has also touched the hearts of my 1.25 billion fellow Indians. It highlights the importance of our Strategic Partnership, placing ASEAN at the centre of India's Act East Policy.

*- Prime Minister
Narendra Modi*

COVER STORY

A formidable security arrangement was set in place at India Gate, where Prime Minister Modi along with the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind received these guests ahead of one of the most dazzling spectacles of India's civil and military might, as also its incredible cultural diversity and splendour, lavishly showcased on Rajpath.

Security arrangement for the foreign dignitaries as well as the Indian leaders was a logistical and protocol nightmare. Floral aesthetics softened the harsh reality of the 100 ft bullet-proof enclosure where Mr Modi personally ushered in the leaders on arrival, from Rashtrapati Bhavan, at Rajpath—the grand parade venue.

The impressive line-up of the leaders attending the extravaganza included Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, the Sultan Of Brunei, Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte Of Philippines, Joko Widodo, the President Of Indonesia Najib Razak, Prime Minister Of Malaysia, Nguyen Xuân Phúc, Prime Minister Of Vietnam, President Halima Yacob of Singapore, President Htin Kyaw of Myanmar, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha of Thailand and Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith of Laos. With clockwork-like precision and strict protocol procedures, the first to arrive was the Prime Minister of Brunei and the last —the Thai king, with a minute's gap between each arrival at the podium. The ceremonials were launched with the Prime Minister paying homage at the Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate to the soldiers who died in the line of duty.

"ASEAN–India poised for new synergy of robust cooperation and promising future"

- PM Lee Hsien Loong



The unfurling of the national flag was accompanied by a 21-gun salute and the playing of the National Anthem. Led by the T-90 tanks, the Brahmos missiles, weapon locating radars the contingents from the army, navy and air force as also the central police forces marching smartly down Rajpath set the tone for a dazzling parade, drawing huge applause from the over 1 lakh crowd, braving the morning chill. Later on, during the parade, the crowds thrilled at the astonishing dare-delivery motorbike stunts of the all-woman contingent of the Border Security Force (BSF). This is the first

time ever that women bikers from the BSF showcased their talent at the parade. The floats are always a big hit and this year they did not disappoint the swelling crowds. There were twenty three tableaux, including the Indo-Asean floats underpinning the growing amity between India and the Asean region. It is the first time the Ministry of External Affairs had a tableau (in fact, it had two!) at the Republic Day Parade. The 'ASEAN-India at 25', floats showcased the historical, civilisational and religious ties that bind India and ASEAN.

Invitation extended at Manila Summit...



It was during the ASEAN Summit in November 2017 that the Indian Prime Minister had extended this invite to the ASEAN leaders to join the 1.25 billion people of India in its 69th year of Republic Day festivities. Celebrated on 26 January Republic Day commemorates the day when the Indian Constitution came to force. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Secretary Preeti Saran during a media brief shared that: "In the course of the last one year, we have been celebrating 25 years of India-ASEAN relations, 15 years of summit partnerships and 5 years of our strategic partnership. It began last year in January with the conference that was held on cultural and civilizational linkages in Jakarta."

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas *...in Pictures*

Looking East Never Looked
So Good

Indian Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj arrival in Singapore to kick-off the ASEAN-India Pravasi Bhartiya Divas marks an important turn in the relationship of India with the ASEAN region underpinning the ongoing activities around India's 'Act East' Policy.

Photos by Michael Ozaki

COVER STORY



(Left): HE Smt Sushma Swaraj with HE Dr Vivian Balakrishnan at the second day Opening Session and (above) Her Excellency pleased to see all the guests at the Gala Dinner that night

(Row below): Below some highlights from the cultural performances that opened the second day of the PBD on 7th January 2018. The performers included the Temple of Fine Arts, Ramli & Sutra Group.



THE ASEAN - INDIA CONNECTION

"The Indian Diaspora has settled far and wide in Southeast Asia. They are warmly accepted in the local community. ...the ASEAN-India Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Singapore recognised their contribution in forging closer ties between us."

- PM Narendra Modi



(Above from l to r): At the speaker's podium: HE Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and HE Jawed Ashraf. (Above far right): Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and Smt Sushma Swaraj both gave away prizes to winners of youth competitions centred on the diversity and richness of Indian culture and Indo-ASEAN relations

"...the dynamic Indian Diaspora is a natural bridge between Southeast Asia and India - nurturing goodwill and understanding, strengthening cultural links, unleashing the potential of the youth, innovating to power the future and realising the huge possibilities of economic cooperation."

- Smt Sushma Swaraj



COVER STORY

(Left): H.E. Smt. Sushma Swaraj welcomes Guest of Honour for the PBD Gala Dinner, H.E. Mr Teo Chee Hean, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security, Singapore



(Above left): Members of the panel on 'ASEAN India in the Digital World' chaired by (2nd from left) Mr Piyush Gupta CEO & Director of DBS Group Singapore. (Above right): Members of the open forum 'Being Overseas Indian in India & ASEAN, chaired by (2nd from left) Mr Amrit Lugun, Joint Secretary (CPV), Ministry of External Affairs, India

(Row below): Highlights of performances at the PBD Gala Dinner on 7th January 2018.



THE ASEAN - INDIA CONNECTION

"We are a good base for Indian companies to work from in order to expand to South-east Asia and beyond. Singapore can also play a role to connect the many companies from a wide range of countries who have found Singapore to be a useful operational base. There are currently 8,000 Indian companies in Singapore - more than double that from 2009."

- Mr Teo Chee Hean



(Above): More than 3,000 participants attended the PBD at the Marina Bay Sands Conference & Exhibition venue



COVER STORY

"The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is my favourite event of all the programmes organised by the Ministry of External Affairs.

...I want to add one more observation. Whenever an Indian settles abroad, he assimilates very quickly to the new conditions, but never forgets his mother country in his heart. That is why you all have come to attend an event like the PBD."

- Smt Sushma Swaraj



"Singapore is the bridge between India and ASEAN, and our gateway to the broader East. In our values and embrace of diversity and for our vision for the region, Singapore and India mirror each other. So, we are pleased to host this

(Row below): PBD Gala Dinner included performers from Apsara Arts, Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society (SIFAS) and Singapore Indian Orchestra and Choir (SIOC), PA Talents, Singapore.



ASEAN INDIA Bharatiya Divas

Gala Dinner

ROUTE ENDURING FLAVOURS



event in Singapore in the magnificent settings surrounded by symbols
of Singapore's soaring success."

- Ambassador Jawed Ashraf



COVER STORY

Connections Anchored in **Ancient Roots**

By Prionka Ray

route from Coromandel coast or the coast of Bay of Bengal to Cape Comorin and via the Malacca strait to reach the Malay Peninsula.

Over the years, the regions developed an understanding of each other based on the common threads, and the ancient routes continued that traditions of travel, trade and immigration well into modern times. One recent example is the Indian community in Singapore, which is a by-product of the multiple journeys, especially the ones that date back to the founding of the British colonial settlements. According to Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, the diverse and multi-layered Indian diaspora in Singapore is a result of "multiple trajectories of emigration across the Bay of Bengal."

Indian Influences that became the ASEAN Way of Life

The traces and significance of these ancient trails are in the tangible Indian influences that manifested as local traditions in the ASEAN countries. For example, the mythical 'apsaras' feature commonly in Cambodia's Khmer culture and art forms, the Laos temples double up as places of social gatherings and recreational activities, the Malaysian family is considered the centre of the social structure, and loyalty and respect for the elderly is inculcated with vigour. Similarly, Myanmar's food, dialects, customs and handicrafts follow North East Indian states, Thai marriages start with offering of prayers in temples, and the guests in Philippines are welcomed with warmth befitting the Indian 'Atithi Devo Bhava' (the guest is God) philosophy. Even modern Singapore's secular approach traces back to India as it celebrates Deepawali, Chinese New Year and the Malay Hari Raya festivals with equal gaiety.

The Sanskrit language, the Hindu-Buddhist cults, the Dharmashastras and the Indian concept of royalty became essential features of the countries in South-east Asia. Hinduism and Buddhism were followed by the advent of Islam through the Indian Muslim merchants as well. Ostensibly, the reason why the Indian influence was so readily accepted was because these influences and practices resonated with the ASEAN local cultures and ethos, making it easy to assimilate. Thus, right from the Indianised Kingdoms of Funan, Sri Kshetra, Khemer, Sri Vijaya or Sailendra, to the Indian influenced literary

India's influence on the ASEAN way of life started long before the quarter century mark.

It actually began more than two thousand years ago

American historian, Will Durant had once proclaimed that, "In Asia all roads lead from India." Honorary Member of the Siam Society, Dr. Reginald Le May further states that the Indian influence not only goes back "a very long way in time", but it is also way "more permanent" than any other influence in the region. Thus, the partnership between India and ASEAN not only traces back to 25 years, but to almost two millennia. The Indian thread that runs through the culture, cuisine, language, and art forms of the two regions are in fact woven over the centuries by merchants, pilgrims, travellers, and traders, as they journeyed across the ancient maritime and land

routes, bringing with them, their faith, ethos, stories and legends. Over time, the wisdom, colours, and flavours of India permeated into the cultural ethos of the ASEAN nations, modified, curated and then lovingly adapted to suit the local tastes and sensibilities. However, these cultural exchanges are not surprising, given that Southeast Asian countries and India were already a part of the world-trading network by the early centuries of the Christian era. Southeast Asia was particularly attractive to Indian mercantile class and they followed two ancient routes: one that travelled through the land via Bengal, Assam, Manipur and Burma, and the other was the maritime

THE ASEAN - INDIA CONNECTION

masterpieces of Ramakein, Amaramala, Arjuna Vivaha and Bharata Yudha, many Indian influences became absorbed as the ASEAN way of life as well.

One reason for this was due to the fact that these countries were open to embracing Buddhism as a way of life. This willingness resulted in religious syncretism or what can be explained as religious blending that combined cultural and spiritual affinity. The blending is evident in examples such as the practice of Buddhism in Cambodian Hindu temples, in the Hindu rituals and attire that are an integral part of the Malay Muslim weddings, and also in the name of the Indonesian Airlines, Garuda, which derives its name from the vehicle of the Hindu God, Vishnu. Another prominent example is the Mahabharata Monument in central Jakarta, which depicts Krishna and Arjun riding a chariot pulled by eleven horses. These examples prove that the Indian influences continue to be an integral part of the region till date.

Similarly, the countries of the ASEAN were also an integral part of the Indian consciousness. Southeast Asia was portrayed and referred to as the 'Golden Peninsula' or 'Yavadvipa' or 'Suvarnadipa' in the early Indian literature like the Ramayana and the Jataka fables. There was reverse exchange of ideas and artistic techniques in the last century as well. One notable example is of Rabindranath Tagore, who travelled to Southeast Asia and brought the art of Batik from Indonesia to India and taught it to the students in Santiniketan.

Language and Ideas

Though traders were an important link in the ancient partnership, they were not the only ones. Priests and scholars followed through the ancient routes as well, and Sanskrit script became the first form of writing known to have reached Southeast Asia. This resulted in Sanskrit and Pali becoming the language of culture and administration in many countries, and many regions bore distinct Indian names as well. For example, the word Indonesia means the 'Indian islands,' and according to Javanese scholar, Poerbatjoroko, almost 70 to 80 per cent of the Javanese words are either pure Sanskrit or of 'sanskritic' origin. Sanskrit alphabets were adopted for local languages, and alphabets used today for Burmese, Thai, Laos and Cambodia were originally derived from the Indian prototype.

Languages bring ideas, and so was the case in the region as well. The ideas of universal Kingship and the fusion of kingship and notion of divinity were readily accepted and imbibed in the region. Yet India's cultural conquests were peaceful and without forced conversions. Acknowledging the influence, Indonesian nationalist leader, President Sukarno wrote in The Hindu on January 4, 1946, "In the veins of every one of my people flow the blood of Indian ancestors, and the culture that we possess is steeped through and through with Indian influences. Two thousand years ago, people from your country came to Jawadvipa and Suvarnadvipa in the spirit of brotherly love." He further stated that even when they later "turned to Islam," the religion was "brought by people coming from both sides of the Indus." Similar sentiments were expressed by Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia in 1955, as he referred to the "two thousand year old ties which united" Cambodians and Indians. In his words, "It was about two thousand years ago that the first navigators, Indian merchants and Brahmins brought to our ancestors their gods, their techniques, their organization."

Architecture

Architecture was a big part of the cultural influence, and a steady flow of artistic exchanges ensued as well. For example, many Indian artisans from Kalinga (modern day Odisha) came to work temporarily in the courts of the great maritime empire in the Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra between the sixth and the fourteenth century. They helped in building grand temples and monuments, which explains why many of the motifs in these monuments resemble those of Konark, and other eastern temples of India. Many of the monuments were also

modelled after the Gupta period icons, and represented stylised figures of gods, goddesses, Buddha, Apsaras and demons. However, they were depicted with distinct Southeast Asian features. Thus, whether it is the temples of Angkor Wat, Pagan, Borobudur or Prambanan, India has been a source of inspiration for art and architecture.

Literature: Ramayana and Mahabharata

In literature too, many literary works based on the Ramayana and even Mahabharata were created in the region, but they had a distinct local flavour and identity. In the process, the stories were transformed to find a unique narration, such as the one seen in the shadow play and puppet shows based on the legends of Rama. The 'dalangs' popularised the adaptation of these epic works originating outside their country, by adding or changing them to make them more contextual and localised. These localised texts, like that of Seri Rama (Malaysian adaptation of Ramayana) and Ramker (Ramayana Khmer in Cambodia) are regarded as some of the highest literary works of Southeast Asia.

Cuisine

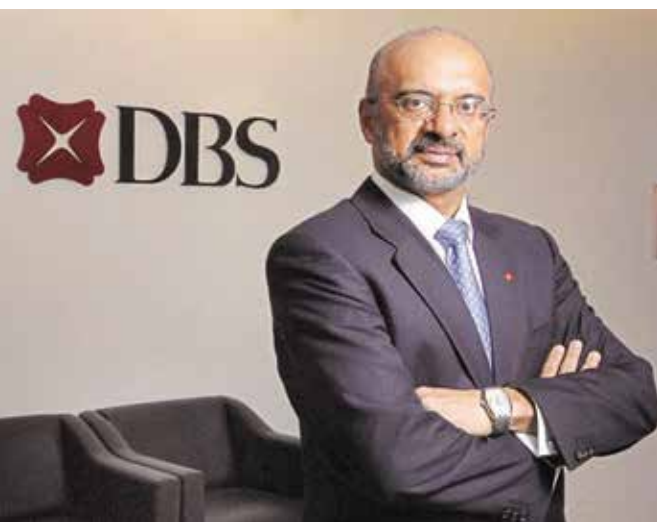
The Indian influence is evident in the food and flavours of ASEAN as well, and many spices are common between the two. Moreover, rice and curry remains a popular staple in the region. However, like other cultural exchanges, though the cuisine of these countries were inspired and influenced by India, they retained their uniqueness. One example of this is the iconic Singapore Fish Head Curry, which was invented by Indians for the Chinese palate which values textures. However, this dish is not found in India.

Ramayana in the Region

Campa has a Valmiki temple (named after the author of Ramayana), and the story of Rama and Sita is so integral to story telling in Indonesia that the very First International Ramayana Festival was organised in Jakarta in 1971 with participation from India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Burma, Nepal, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

In Thailand too, Ramayana inspired paintings, engravings and performances, and King Rama was so revered, that in spite of being primarily a Buddhist state, the king is proclaimed as Rama. In Malaysia, Hikayat Seri Ramo (Story of Rama) is traditionally performed orally, and incorporates indigenous myths and legends.

In Laos, the ever-popular story takes the form of dance, music, and visual arts. The Kampuchean Ramayana is called Ramker or Ramkriti and is available in both prose and poetry. Even in Buddhist Myanmar, the Ramayana tradition is popular.



Piyush Gupta: **Opportunities** that Lie Ahead

Piyush Gupta CEO of DBS Bank Group talks to Editor-in Chief In Diplomacy, Ms Nomita Dhar, on the vibrant atmosphere for investment and furthering business interests for the two regions.

Under his charge, DBS Bank is now licensed to start a wholly owned subsidiary in India. He is bullish about the incredible opportunities opening up for the banking industry with the heightened engagement between India and Singapore as well as India and Asean to their mutual benefit

Being an Indian now based here in Singapore can you tell us about your journey from India to Singapore?

My connections to Singapore date back to the early 80s when I joined Citibank and got sent to this part of the world pretty frequently for training and business trips. Even then it was quite incredible how much progress several countries had made in South East Asia, in particular Singapore.

When I finally moved to Singapore in the early 90s, I had in the last 25 years spent 15 in Singapore on three different stints. In between I've had the opportunity to work and live in Indonesia twice and in Malaysia for five years, so I know South East Asia quite well. The bulk of my career was in Citibank which took me to several countries in different functions; but in the last eight years I decided to put down roots in Singapore and had the fantastic opportunity to become the CEO of DBS. It's been a great journey. In the whole process I found that there are a lot of cultural similarities between South East Asia and India. Obviously our roots go back a long way and that's helped me considerably in understanding the pulse of the people and integrating myself extremely well in each of the countries where I was given the opportunity to work in.

India and ASEAN are celebrating 25 years of partnership and have very ancient ties. What kind of growth potential do you see between them now?

It's true that India's engagement with SE Asia dates back at least to 200BCE, which from the 17th century went on to get further supplemented with the intense trading relations with the trading communities...the Sindhis, the Gujaratis, and then the people from Tamil Nadu and Kerala pitching in in the last 200-300 years. So that engagement got even more deeply entrenched between the two regions.

It is unfortunate that in the last 30-50 years the degree of engagement has atrophied a bit because (a) India started getting drawn into the socialist fold and (b) started looking westward. SE Asia too increasingly started getting involved in its own market-driven economics and started building the Pacific economy. It's unfortunate because both regions—the Indian subcontinent, and India in particular, and SE Asia have a lot to offer each other.

As we go forward, actually I am very bullish about the prospects for a revival of these ancient roots. I think there is a real opportunity building something bigger than we have had in the last 20-30 years.

First of all, for SE Asia India has to be a market of great opportunities - a billion plus people, a growing and thriving middle class, one



“It’s quite clear that India has technology and depth and talent today, which are unsurpassed. The talent is deep and it is very broad - it addresses all the new digital technologies that are prevalent in the world today.”

of the fastest growing economies in the world. There is no question that this must be a great consumer market for many SE Asian countries; and it is true that SE Asian countries have also been providers of commodities - coal from Indonesia, palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia, but, I think the future is going to reflect a shift in the nature of that trade pattern to a more higher-up-value-chain level of trade.

The second big thing that SE Asia can see in India is a great destination for investment. Certainly countries such as Singapore, who with a saving surplus (in addition to their own savings), are a very good harvest for capital accumulation. So proving themselves as a great gateway for capital flows into India is the distinct possibility as I see it. On the other end of the spectrum, India is tremendously in need of capital, certainly long term capital for infrastructure, but even our ongoing private capital formation in India has been slow... and therefore the second big opportunity that I see, in addition to the upgrading of trade, is the capital flows from SE Asia into India.

On the reverse part of the spectrum it’s

quite clear that India has technology and depth and talent today, which is unsurpassed. The talent is deep and it is very broad - it addresses all the new digital technologies that are prevalent in the world today. SE Asia, which is like any other region, is going through the throes of disruption and massive transformation can easily leverage on the talent that is available in India in large numbers. It is again interesting that so far it is mostly the European and Americans who have leveraged on Indian talent. East Asia has not, but that opportunity is very ripe for the picking. That is one area where I think India has a significant and important role to play in the region.

But that’s not the only area. In the space of consumer products SE Asia itself is a big market. It’s also growing very rapidly and interestingly Indian brands tend to pay quite well. It’s again an interesting observation that the 3-wheeler scooter in Indonesia is called ‘Bajaj’ - from ‘Bajaj’ in India. It’s almost a generic brand name, but there’s a whole bunch of other brand names which could do extremely well in markets. So developing a consumer market in SE Asia is a second real big opportunity.

Regarding capital flows, I feel over time being able to integrate capital flows actually in a reverse direction - strategic money coming from India out into this region, is the other big thing that I can see happening. Now all this is outside of other geo-political alignments. There could be some real opportunities for both sub-regions to work well together.

So you can see I’m generally positive and bullish about the prospect of the greater ASEAN-India cooperation and working together in years to come.

As a bank in Asia and India how would you like to leverage on all the opportunities you have talked about and how would people, companies and businesses benefit from it?

First of all, consistent with the broad theme for us as a bank, India is a big market and appears to be a very interesting market. It is one of the most important countries where we are investing. DBS has over \$1 billion invested in India to build out our positions. We were principally focused on corporate banking, which is helping India companies, particularly regarding international needs, but also helping Asian companies... Singapore companies for example who work into India. In recent times we have upped our ambitions to try and be bigger in the small and medium enterprises, as well as in the retail space. With that intent we have launched a pure digital offering called ‘Digibank’. We tied up to do a digital distribution of our SME product. We have recently got approval to start a wholly owned subsidiary in India that will give us an opportunity to increase our distribution points over the next few years and therefore you can see that both from capital investment and putting resources into the country we are really upping our game - it’s a huge opportunity for us.

But we are also doing the reverse - that is in the last year we have set up a technology centre in Hyderabad, it’s a centre for innovation. We have built it up to 1000 people already and expect it to go up to 2000 people by next year or so and in this centre is the heart of our inventive and creative technology for the whole group. We are already driving our transformation agenda and digital agenda for countries

On intergration...



Piyush *I am a Singaporean*

Indians have settled all over the world as NRIs. You being an Indian have contributed positively yourself, what has been your experience in contributing as an individual to India and Singapore? There's also talk about NRIs tending to confining themselves to the comfort zone of their own community and not making an effort to integrate with society of the host country.

I think firstly it's not unexpected that people of a particular ethnicity tend to congregate in their own space - the Germans do this...the Americans do the same thing, and I'm sure if you went to any part of the world and found another Singaporean you would tend to gravitate toward the Singaporean. It's a perfectly natural tendency.

However, I'm a firm believer that any ethnic minority in any host country needs to make a special effort to try and integrate into the agenda and requirements of the host country. It has to be more than a document or a passport for the status of being there. So in that sense I'm quite encouraged that the Indian diaspora has made some meaningful contributions to ASEAN in general and in Singapore in particular. It's not just the third and fourth gen-

in Southeast Asia, whether its Singapore or Indonesia, all out of the Hyderabad centre.

Did you see any change in the ease of doing business over these years you have been looking at India?

Changes made in recent years are actually quite important with far reaching long term consequences. I think India now is stacked with technology infrastructure - the Aadhar, the UPI - all game changers. One reason why we launched our Digibank in India was that the infrastructure in India is better and more facilitative than anywhere else in this region. On top of that there are other things such as the Chandan Yojana, the 200 million bank

accounts with the direct benefit transfer which take it straight into individual accounts. All of these are extremely progressive moves that for our banking industry for sure make India a very attractive place to make business easier compared to other countries where we operate.

Of course, there is always room for improvement. The things we need to do is to iron out the rigidity of bureaucracy but I would say things are definitely better now.

Do you see a lot of Indian companies coming into ASEAN, or taking the Singapore route as a hub to do business here?

There are six or seven thousand companies registered in Singapore and many of them just use Singapore as a gateway, many of them use it for raising capital or trading operations and a lot of them use it to penetrate deeper into the consumer business activities in the region. We bank all these companies exactly as we bank companies going into India. We have an India Desk which focuses on the Indian companies which are coming out to India into this part of the world to establish two-way connectivity between the Indian requirements and the Indian businesses, as well as the requirements outside the region. That is our competitive differentiation which works very well for us.

A wide perspective View from DBS Bank executive offices at Marina Boulevard reflects growth far beyond Singapore's shores

eration Indians, even the first generation of Indians have made a contribution to the areas of technology, entrepreneurship and financial services in particular.

In my own case I have had the good fortune of working in Indonesia. I worked in the bank reconstruction programme for the Indonesian government. In Malaysia, I worked with the Malaysian government very actively on a host of financial services and agendas and more recently in Singapore where I was both trustee of SINDA, on the board of the National Research Agency and Deputy Chairman of Spring Singapore.

I believe I have tried to integrate and give as much back to the country in many forms outside of my actual bank-

ing job. My banking job, of course itself gives me opportunities to make important contributions whether it's in terms of helping to present a point of view with respect to national policy or even representing Singapore in many international forums in the field of finance.

The bottom-line I think it is incumbent upon people like us NRIs, that as you go into host countries to make sure you have a contribution to make which is relevant and meaningful to that host country.

Would you consider yourself an Indian or a Singaporean?

I am a Singaporean.

Is there any special experience you can share that stands out in your time here?

When I moved to Indonesia in the 90s I was struck by two things - the first the Mahabharata and Ramayana serials which were running in India were being shown here as a dubbed version and I found everyone was off the roads, so popular was the programme. This is the first time I realized that the power of Indian mythology and how the Indian epics are so deeply entrenched in the Southeast Asian region. The second incident was when I was in Bali, my son was very young and everyone would call him Rahul, this was shortly after the release of Shah Rukh Khan's movie *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*. It made me realize the importance of Bollywood in shaping people's imagination in this region of what India has to offer.

So if you compare yourself with other banks what is your take on operations on Indian and ASEAN opportunities?

There is almost no other bank from East Asia which has a meaningful presence in India so we are particularly differentiated on that front. We are the fourth largest foreign bank there in terms of size and there is no other Asian bank, so there isn't that much competition.

And if you look at the reverse flow, Indian banks have branches in the region but not that large and therefore in terms of capacity to build capital we are competitively advantaged to those many players.

In 2018 Singapore is Chair of ASEAN and lots of meetings and activities are expected during this tenure. How can one take advantage of the growing opportunities between ASEAN and India?

Singapore's chairmanship of ASEAN is obviously a positive and India can work with it, but I think the recognition of 50 years of India-Asean partnership is perhaps more important than the fact that Singapore is Chair for a year. I think India is recognizing and stepping up on that and the fact that all 10 leaders of the ASEAN countries will be chief guests at India's Republic Day parade this year is quite unprecedented situation. I think it speaks of the fact that India's 'Look

East' policy, now rejigged as the 'Act East' policy is now really beginning to get teeth and hopefully we will be seeing some real action as we go forward.

Indo-Pacific is a new term being coined— People are talking about an Indo-Pacific century.

I think it's premature at this stage. I believe the opportunities are real, but I think the Indo-Pacific term is being orchestrated from a geo-political standpoint. I think the economic possibilities are real, but all the countries in the Indo-Pacific region have really a lot more work to do, if we step up and are going to make it as the Indo-Pacific century.





Ever the iconoclast, Kishore Mahbubani does not shrink from providing his personal (and often provocative) views and observations about growing up in Singapore, the island's relationship with India and the strength of Asia's growth in the near future

Kishore Mahbubani: At a New **Crossroads**

Kishore Mahbubani is one of Singapore's top academicians and a former diplomat. Editor in Chief, Mrs Nomita Dhar, spoke to him in December 2017 before he stepped down as Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the end of the year

Welcome Professor. We would like to hear about your journey as a diplomat and as a person of Indian origin and how you have contributed in the service of Singapore. Your family was from South Asia, can you first tell us something about that?

I am a child of the Partition (between India and Pakistan). My parents were Hindu Sindhis, living in the province of Sindh, which became part of Pakistan after the Partition. 1947 was also the year when my parents left Sindh to come and settle in Singapore. I was born in Singapore a year later. So if it had not been for the Partition, I would not have been born here.

You have seen Singapore develop from a Third World to a First World country. And now we are in a region that's predicted to grow vigorously to be part of the 'Asian Century'. What is your take on this?

I have been very fortunate. I grew up in a poor family in a poor Singapore. We went through the typical trials and tribulations of that period during my childhood. From that, we have gone on to a time when the per capita income of Singapore is one of the highest in the world. When Singapore turned 50, I wrote an article saying that Singapore is one of the most successful nations in human history. There is no other country which has improved its standard of living as quickly and comprehensively as Singapore has done in these 50 years. And I say 'comprehensively', because I refer not only to the economic development of Singapore but also to its social development (housing, healthcare, education) which is one of the best in the world. And all this has been accomplished in a very short time. No other country can match Singapore's incredible growth.

Do you think this growth is sustainable and it's going to go on for another 50 years? What do you foresee?

I'm optimistic about the future of Singapore. At the same time, I would send out a word of caution. Most countries and companies that remain successful for a long time tend to carry on with the same formulae of the past into the future. That's a very dangerous thing. That's when you get what I call the Kodak syndrome. Kodak was the most successful photographic equipment company in the world and then it just disappeared because there were new technology changes to which it did not adapt. Similarly, Singapore has to change and adapt. The good news is that Singapore is changing and adapting, and that's the reason why I am optimistic that it will do very well in the next 50 years also.

In the Asian context the big powers - China, India...everybody is looking at us and ASEAN - so what do you see for all of Asia in terms of opportunities?

In my writings, especially in my book *The New Asian Hemisphere*, I emphasise the fact that from the year 01 to the year 1820, the two largest economies in the world were those of China and India. It is only in the last 200 years that Europe took off and North America took off. Against the backdrop of the past 2000 years of world history, the last 200 years of world history have been a major historical aberration. And all aberrations come to a natural end. So what you will see is a natural return of China and India. In fact, PricewaterhouseCoopers has predicted that by 2050, the No. 1 economy of the world will be China, No. 2 India, No.3 USA and No.4 Japan. Three of the largest economies in the world will



“...in the most competitive human laboratory in the world (US), the Indian community is the most successful community in terms of per capita income. So, if Indians in India can achieve 25% of the per capita income of these Indians in America, India would have the world’s largest economy.”

be Asian. So the Asian century is happening, and, it’s happening faster than anybody anticipated.

Looking at India what do you think about its growth right now and where is it headed?

I’m very optimistic about India’s growth and future. Many years ago McKinsey came out with a publication on India’s prospects. I wrote an essay for this publication in which I said that if you look at the most successful Indian community in the world, it’s the Indian community in the US. The US is the most competitive human laboratory in the world, because the best and brightest from the whole world goes there. And in the most competitive human laboratory in the world, the Indian community is the most successful community in terms of per capita income. So, if Indians in India can achieve 25% of the per capita income of these Indians in

America, India would have the world’s largest economy.

Indians are a people who can contribute tremendously. What is your take on how Indians in Singapore have contributed?

The contributions of the Indian community in Singapore have been remarkable. We have had two Presidents of Indian origin, Devan Nair and S.R. Nathan. We have had several permanent secretaries of Indian origin. We have had several government secretaries of Indian origin. We have had outstanding Indians in every field of endeavour in Singapore who have been very successful and it is clear that that they have made very significant contributions to Singapore’s growth and development.

This year, 2018, Singapore holds the Chair of ASEAN. Is it a big responsi-

bility? What does it herald for Singapore— and since Singapore and India have been very close partners what opportunities does this throw up for us?

Singapore and India have a very special friendship that has developed, in part, as a result of their collaboration in the ASEAN process. I was foreign secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the mid-1990s when India became a dialogue partner of ASEAN. In the book *The ASEAN Miracle*, which I co-authored with Jeffery Sng, there is a section on ASEAN and India in which I point out that for many years, India was knocking on ASEAN’s doors. However, India could not come in to ASEAN because Malaysia and Indonesia said, “If you bring in India as a dialogue partner, you must bring in Pakistan as well and treat them equally.” But after a while, through the persuasive powers of the then prime minister of Singa-



Next Gen - Citizens of the World...

Coming to you and your growth here as a person of Indian origin did you feel more Indian or Singaporean while you were living here? What about the opportunities that came your way?

I would say when I grew up as a child here in Singapore, my parents - especially my mother - were very ardent Indian nationalists. So I grew up to adulthood reading and writing Hindi and Sindhi. My mother thought that someday, I would go back and live in India as an Indian. But as I grew up and became educated in Singapore I became more and more Singaporean and I am 100% Singaporean now.

How is it with the next generation? Your children? What values do you inculcate in them?

Well I have three children, aged 31, 29 and 27. Two of them live in the US and one lives in Singapore. I would say that they have a much more global, cosmopolitan outlook. They are citizens of the world who could be comfortable living anywhere in the world. I expect that they will keep moving around in the world.

pore, Goh Chok Tong, we managed to get the ASEAN countries to admit India as a dialogue partner.

I'm amazed that even today, when I go to Delhi, they remember how helpful Singapore was in bringing India in as a dialogue partner. So I think Singapore's chairmanship is more than likely to make the ASEAN-India relationship even stronger and it's going to start with a big bang in January 2018. As you must be aware, all 10 leaders of the ASEAN countries will attend ceremonies of the Republic Day in Delhi in January 26th. It's the first time ever that so many heads of state will attend India's Republic Day and it's a wonderfully symbolic demonstration of the close relationship between ASEAN and India. And it is taking place under Singapore's chairmanship, which is appropriate, considering Singapore's critical role in bringing ASEAN and India closer together.

So it's a time for celebration - 25 years of India-ASEAN partnership. What is the potential you see for ASEAN and India in the near future?

The most natural partner for ASEAN countries amongst all the great powers is India. In our book *The ASEAN Miracle* we talk of the four waves of influence on Southeast Asia: The Indian wave, the Chinese wave, the Islamic wave and the Western wave. The first wave was the Indian wave, with

the biggest influence. Look at the 10 Southeast Asian countries and they all have a cultural base that has come from India, except for Vietnam which has cultural influences from China. For instance, you have The Ramayana being performed in Indonesia and Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. And, amazingly, when the Philippines hosted the 50th anniversary celebrations of ASEAN in Manila during the East Asia Summit, even though the country itself is predominantly Christian, it presented a performance of The Ramayana to welcome the delegates. That was a very powerful symbol of the deep cultural links between India and Southeast Asia. These cultural links were interrupted by the colonial period, but with that period long gone the ASEAN-India relationship will rebuild a natural cultural bridge that existed between them for over a 1000 years.

There is talk of an Indo-Pacific century. What is your take on that?

It is a natural development because it is very clear that India's role in both Asia and East Asia will grow stronger. And as it grows stronger we have to find new terms to indicate that India is very much part of this East Asia story. So the term Indo-Pacific captures it. But we have to go beyond the slogan to add substance to it. A slogan is easy to coin. The substance is harder to deliver - and that's something that needs to be done.

How in your opinion can that be achieved?

I think it is good that India has signed the Free Trade Agreement with the ASEAN countries. But I think it is important to strengthen it with another equally important initiative which is the RCEP (Regional Cooperative Economic Partnership). The RCEP was launched by ASEAN and it includes the 10 ASEAN countries and six other countries - China, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and India. If India could become a stronger promoter of RCEP, it would bring India even closer to East Asia and make it a truly Indo-Pacific country, because the other 15 participants of RCEP are also from the Indo-Pacific region.

While we are living in relatively peaceful times there are challenges in issues such as piracy, terrorism, cyber piracy that haunt us. How does Asia stand collectively in all of this?

You will never achieve perfection or a Utopia in human affairs. There will always be challenges. The question lies in our capabilities in handling them. Certainly in the struggle against terrorism, both ASEAN and India have suffered gravely. I think that now, the level of intelligence collaboration amongst many countries in the world (including between ASEAN and India) has improved a great deal. That's what

we need to do to improve the ability to handle these challenges.

You have represented Singapore in some of the best platforms, and now you've been heading this prestigious school here. What has been the best role you've had?

I would say that I am very lucky. I have enjoyed two wonderful careers. One in the foreign services for Singapore (33 years) especially those years as the permanent secretary at the ministry of foreign affairs, and then in the UN as Singapore's Ambassador to the UN and later as President of the UN Security Council. After that, I've had a wonderful career as Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at NUS. Now I am on the verge of a whole new career. I don't know what it will be as I'm planning to take a sabbatical first.

For you to inspire young Singaporean and Indian Singaporean looking at a career in diplomacy or heading schools, what would be your message to them?

It's very simple. Study hard, work hard. I was lucky because even though I was poor, I discovered the public library and that really saved my life. I spent weekends there reading books, even good fiction at a very young age and it was important in developing my mind. So if you haven't, done it yet, do it now, because it's very difficult to make up for the time lost in later years.

How do you manage to balance your work and your personal life, what with all your commitments in such important public positions, the school, your writing?

I don't think I did that very well. But I must emphasize one thing - writing books for me is a joy, it's not work. Mohammad Rafi's songs are a big inspiration for me when I sit down to write.

You have worked with the best, especially with the founding father of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew. What was that experience like?

It was one of the greatest experiences of my life. In fact I was able to work with three of the key founding fathers— Lee Kuan Yew, of course, and Dr Goh Keng Swee and S Rajaratnam. All three of them were very different, yet at the same time they were outstanding lead-

ers and certainly the toughest taskmasters I have ever worked with. Lee Kuan Yew was such a perfectionist. When you submitted work to him, he would say: "I double check, I triple check and then I check again." He was a demanding boss who had zero tolerance for mistakes. We knew that if we made a serious mistake, our careers were finished. So, you had to be very careful before submitting your work to him.

So you must have been outstanding?

I don't know if I was. What I do know is that I survived. But it was a pleasure to work with all three of them.

Do you think Singapore has put in enough effort to produce leaders of this stature and continue the legacy?

I think it would be difficult for Singapore to have another Lee Kuan Yew. He was not just a great leader for Singapore he was one of the greatest leaders of the world. He was a truly remarkable leader. So Singapore will have to wait a long time for someone to fill those shoes.

Why did you decide to step down from being Dean at the school?

It's important to know when to make a change. In my 13 years as Dean, the school has done very well. However, I'm on the verge of turning 70. I still have another 10 years or so for an active career ahead of me. This is the time to change careers.

Are you thinking of going into politics?

Oh no! In Singapore if you want to go into politics you must be in your 30s or 40s. I'm happy considering other options.

...such as?

I'm practically a Sindhi and most Sindhis go into business. I haven't fulfilled my natural destiny! I will certainly keep on writing and speaking, serving on boards. I'm notorious for writing very strong stuff. In fact I have a book coming out in April with a provocative title, *Has the West Lost It?* being launched in London. The interesting thing is that though I write and say a lot of provocative things people keep inviting me to come back!

"I'm practically a Sindhi and most Sindhis go into business. I haven't fulfilled my natural destiny! I will certainly keep on writing and speaking, serving on boards. I'm notorious for writing very strong stuff. In fact I have a book coming out in April with a provocative title *Has the West Lost It?* being launched in London. The interesting thing is that though I write and say a lot of provocative things people keep inviting me to come back!"

*SHIKHAR asks H.E. Ong Keng Yong,
a top Singapore civil servant in the diplomatic
service and former Secretary-General of ASEAN
for his views on*

INDIA & ASEAN and the **Singapore Chair** Factor in 2018



He speaks from a unique perspective. H.E. Ong Keng Yong is currently the Executive Deputy Chairman of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and concurrently Ambassador-at-Large at the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he has also served as **Secretary-General of ASEAN Secretariat**. In the light of the celebration of 25 years of ASEAN-India relations he opens up to Shikhar's Editor-in Chief Ms Nomita Dhar about how it is a time of deep reflection and renewed engagement on ASEAN-India prospects as dialogue partners of the future in these challenging times.

As you look back over these past 25 years please tell us a bit about the progress of ASEAN-India as dialogue partners.

ASEAN-India relations have had their ups and down. Currently we are moving to another upturn. In a few weeks all 10 ASEAN leaders will meet in New Delhi to join Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the celebrations and ceremonies of India's Republic Day. Hopefully, with that kind of political impetus we can get all the officials to accelerate the programmes that are in play in their respective sectors.

What is your take on bilateral matters between the two regions?

Negotiations on bilaterals in ASEAN-India relations are moving slowly basically because there are so many areas to cover and everybody is anxious for their respective positions. I think if the officials and negotiators follow the cue from the Prime Minister of India and ASEAN leaders, there can be some positive compromise.

What about the prospect of India's greater engagement in the ASEAN region now?

We need to acknowledge India's role in the bigger regional matters such as safety and security in the Indian Ocean, piracy issues in the Arabian Sea and the problems in the Bay of Bengal. These are also areas which we really need to work on together. With China's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), some people feel that there are some disadvantages because the Chinese projects with Sri Lanka and Pakistan have attracted controversies. But I think if we move more in the direction

“I think it’s a good thing to have another big country in the region to be more actively engaged in the world of Asia. We want India to be there. We want the Indian Ocean to be a part of the dialogue and engagement. The more we talk about Indo-Pacific the more we see the value of ASEAN.”

of mutuality and ASEAN and India talk about things of mutual interest, such as the RCEP (of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership), there will be a more cooperative mood and things can mature in a better way. Both sides will be the richer for it. ASEAN wants to focus on pushing forward the RCEP, which would materialize in a higher level of trade and investment flows.

What is your reaction to the pace of engagement on this front?

I would say it has been slow, but not hopeless. So we have to continue to engage each other, look at it positively. There must be give and take in this engagement. It is just a question of coming together to see how we can offer each other additional support in our endeavour together.

The RECP is a big deal. I suppose there are now people who believe that India’s priority is to get foreign investment into many sectors as it is recognized as a global power; so what happens in trade negotiations is left to the respective ministries which naturally tended to take a more parochial position - a

more sectoral approach.

And the future of ASEAN-India co-operation?

I think ASEAN - India should have more cooperation. It is something we can do. Hopefully, in the coming years we will see more ASEAN-India cooperation. Further down the road we can see other things happening as well, but one thing that is on the horizon, which I think we can move in a big way is the Indo-Pacific concept.

For a long time there has been talk of this in the Asia-Pacific region, and there has been a big buzz in intellectual circles in Singapore as to what this means. I think it’s a good thing to have another big country in the region to be more actively engaged in the world of Asia. We want India to be there. We want the Indian Ocean to be a part of the dialogue and engagement. The more we talk about Indo-Pacific the more we see the value of ASEAN.

ASEAN is very important as it is geographically, physically and politically in the middle of this Indo-Pacific region.

This idea of Indo-Pacific would offer a good platform to strengthen ASEAN centrality and at the same time maintain its traditional role to bring all the big countries together to look at all the various possibilities in the region. So yes, there’s a lot of potential; it’s just also about how opportunities can be used to find a way to focus on the beneficial aspects instead of looking just at the differences amongst us. There will always be differences—but it is always better to look forward and see how we can focus on the cooperative aspect rather than get depressed about the diversity and difference of opinions amongst us.

ASEAN is very diverse, yet we are also part of a whole. The good thing is that all of us want peace...to grow and create opportunities. I think for the leaders to be a catalyst for growth and development for all concerned they need to synergise and come together more strategically. I feel there is a great deal of dynamism in there which can be better utilized for a brighter future.

The above appears as part of a wider ranging interview by Mr Ong Keng Yong in www.indiplomacy.com



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Manohar Khiatani: What **ASCENDAS** Learnt in India

Khiatani, the Deputy Group CEO of Ascendas-Singbridge shares how the “digitalisation of India” is creating huge waves of opportunities with the giant Singapore-based developer expanding its footprint to include development of Andhra Pradesh new capital Amaravati and expansion into the Industrial Facilities & Logistics Sector



International Tech Park Bangalore was set up way back in 1992, what have been the high points of your journey?

Ascendas-Singbridge has a long history in India. We conceptualised India's first work-live-play IT park concept with International Tech Park Bangalore (ITPB) in 1992. Opened in 1998, ITPB is the first IT Park in India, and was developed as part of a joint venture with the Karnataka Industrial & Areas Development Board (KIADB), which is wholly owned by the Government of Karnataka.

ITPB has played an important role in the growth of Bangalore as a leading Information Technology hub in India.

Today, ITPB offers some 5.5 million square feet of space with over 51,000 people working there.

Over the years we have expanded beyond Bangalore to successfully develop IT Parks in other cities in India, namely Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune and Gurgaon. In 2007, we listed Ascendas India Trust on the Singapore Stock Exchange. This Trust, which holds seven of our IT park assets in India, was the first listed Indian property trust in Asia, marking another pioneering milestone for our activities in India. Ascendas India Trust currently has a market capitalisation of over S\$1 billion and has won several accolades.



“The vision is to create a vibrant, diverse and future-ready city for the people of Andhra Pradesh, and a compelling destination for global investments and talents. This project will be testament of our expertise in urbanisation projects.”

*(Top): Artist Impression of Amaravati City Seed Development Area in Andhra Pradesh.
(Left): International Tech Park Bangalore*

Today, Ascendas-Singbridge's Assets under Management (AUM) in India exceeds S\$2 billion and we continue to expand strongly in the country. We are also very proud of the fact that over the years, we have built up a strong local team of highly capable and dedicated people in India.

India's IT industry in the last two decades has been revolutionised, what's your take on the current opportunities and growth prospects?

Over the years, India's IT industry has grown impressively and demonstrated its unique strengths and resilience. The size of Indian IT and IT-enabled industry is pegged at US\$154

billion employing around 4 million employees, growing at a rate of 8% and accounted for 7.7% of India's Gross Domestic Product.

Ascendas-Singbridge sees continued strong growth in the IT and IT-enabled services sector. While certain segments of the industry will face the threat from automation, obsolescence and lower cost competition, there are even more growth opportunities. In particular, the opportunities arising from the digital revolution are tremendous.

We believe that India is uniquely placed to benefit from 'digitalisation' given its broad and deep talent base

and the strong base of IT and IT-enabled services companies, who can easily move into servicing the digital industry. Also, over the years India has moved up the value chain as we witness more and more global IT firms setting up their innovation centres in India.

With the increasing internet penetration and attention on newer trends like cloud computing and virtualisation, the Data Centre industry is also emerging as an attractive segment with enormous opportunities.

All this bodes well for the continued growth with lots of optimism in India.

“The recent implementation of the GST system, is expected to lead to a simplification of India’s tax regime... it is likely to result in a more efficient supply chain and lower production costs in the country. Through this, the ease of doing business in India will be enhanced, and by virtue of proximity, ASEAN businesses would find it increasingly attractive to commence operations in the country.”

With your footprint in many of India’s growth centres, how have the policies like “Make in India” impacted your business?

The primary goal of the “Make in India” initiative is to develop India into a global manufacturing hub, by encouraging both multinational as well as domestic companies to manufacture their products within the country .

We are very supportive of this initiative as we believe that a strong manufacturing sector is critical for India to have a strong, resilient and diversified economy that also creates good employment opportunities for its people.

Encouraged by the ‘Make in India’ initiative, the growth of e-commerce, and implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST), Ascendas-Singbridge has also moved into the Industrial Facilities and Logistics sector in India. We recently partnered Indian industrial real estate specialist, Firstspace Realty, to deliver state-of-the-art logistics and industrial facilities across major warehousing and manufacturing hubs in India. We are developing our first greenfield facility in Chennai and actively looking at other opportunities.

How can ASEAN countries tap on India’s opportunities?

Investment from ASEAN to India has been over US\$70 billion in the last 17 years, accounting for more than 17% of India’s total foreign direct investment. Similarly, India’s investment in ASEAN during the same period has been more than US\$40 billion . Prime Minister Modi’s zeal in making transformative changes to his government to move the country forward has been encouraging. These reforms would help ASEAN businesses gain confidence in India’s political and economic stability,

and give them more reasons to consider India as a platform to initiate or expand their business operations.

The recent implementation of the GST system, which is expected to lead to a simplification of India’s tax regime, is an example of a positive development as it is likely to result in a more efficient supply chain and lower production costs in the country. Through this, the ease of doing business in India will be enhanced, and by virtue of proximity, ASEAN businesses would find it increasingly attractive to commence operations in the country. Poised to become the third-largest economy of the world by 2030 , and with various other reforms taking shape, India offers immense opportunities in the infrastructural development of the country.

Andhra Pradesh’s Amravati is the latest addition to your portfolio in India, what is your expectations?

Ascendas-Singbridge has been in India for over 20 years, and India remains one of the key countries for the Group. As mentioned, we have undertaken several pioneering initiatives in India, and our involvement in the Amaravati project, is another such exciting opportunity.

We were awarded the joint master development rights (with Sembcorp Development) to the Amravati City’s Start-Up Area (SUA) in Andhra Pradesh in May 2017. We expect the SUA to create the first centres of activity, attracting settlers and investors of business, commercial and residential spaces into Amaravati City. The vision is to create a vibrant, diverse and future-ready city for the people of Andhra Pradesh, and a compelling destination for global investments and talents. This project will be testament of our expertise in urbanisation projects.

Other successful urbanisation projects in our portfolio includes the Sino-Singapore Guangzhou Knowledge City (pictured left), as well as the Sino-Singapore Jilin Food Zone, both in China. Together with our partners, we will strive to harness our knowledge and capabilities from these projects to build up the SUA area for the Amaravati City.



K. Kesavapany: Keeping **Active**

First, it was 'Look East' and now it is 'Act East.' The 81-year old retired diplomat notes that India's policies are propelling the country in several directions. He also pays tribute to other diaspora giants and gives direct advice about getting involved with India

HE K. KESAVAPANY's family hails from Andhra Pradesh in India. He was born in Malaysia and eventually settled in Singapore. The retired Director of the then Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, continues to live an active life at 81. A career diplomat he has served as also Singapore's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva while concurrently accredited as Ambassador to Italy and Turkey. Mr Kesavapany's illustrious career also includes a stint as the first elected Chairman of the General Council of the WTO when it was established in 1995. He is presently a Governor on the Board of the Singapore International Foundation and President Emeritus of the Singapore Indian Association.

Looking at the current level of engagements he has with civic groups and societies in Singapore no one can say he is taking things easy in his golden years. Avoiding any level of complacency is uppermost in his mind when he gave an overall scorecard for Singapore's Indian community here. He felt, "Indians here by and large have done well. But we need to continue to pedal to be part of the national developmental story."

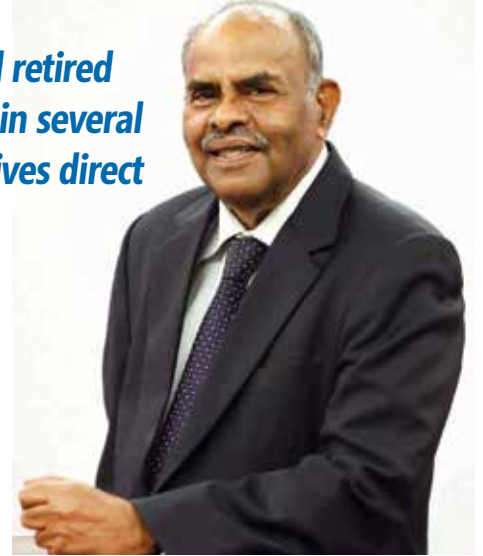
In the context of India's active engagement with ASEAN and in particular with Singapore with the hosting of the PBD in the island republic in January, he is supportive of Indians and any Singaporean or Singapore company exploring the opportunities that are growing multi-fold in India. It seems like a natural extension of sustaining and building on the progress of the Indian community. On just how Indians can capitalise on this, he gave several examples, "Take Amravati, the new capital in Andhra Pradesh. Thousands of jobs are needed as are IT specialists and the like. It's a matter of going there and making the contacts, just as the

Chinese in Singapore are doing when they go back to China and using the opportunities opening up there. A large number of modern new towns are being built there. Unfortunately, the local Indians here in Singapore, have yet to make that push in large numbers."

He noted that the Indian Chamber of Commerce has been active by taking several delegations to India, "We now have good contacts in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The opportunities are there. India is one of the fastest growing countries and it has been said by 2020 it will be No. 2 or No.3."

"We used to have all the cultural activities with Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi dancers coming over from India, but now we have developed our own expertise and we are taking our culture there. We recently produced a dance drama and we had an Indian critic, Sunil Kothari, over remarking that he was quite "blown over" with the performance. We have reached a stage when we can take all this back to India."

Spreading the net wider in the context of India and ASEAN, 25 years of co-operation and dialogue participation have passed and before that a long civilisational and cultural association already existed between them, he opined Indians who have settled in the region can also contribute to this. "To be quite frank, unlike the Chinese, I mean mainland China, who never let go of their community here, for a long time, the local Indian communities in the region were left pretty much to their own devices, partly because India had its own share of problems. But then there was a realization, particularly after 1990, that SE Asia and East Asia were important in strategic and economic terms and the Indian government started its "Look East" policy; this was during Narshima Rao



K. Kesavapany has worn many hats during his career. It includes stints in the UN and being the the first elected Chairman of the General Council of the WTO. He remains active as a present Governor on the Board of the Singapore International Foundation

Recognition

...of K. Kesavapany's contributions through the work he has done include awards from the Singapore Government: *Public Administration (Gold)*; *Public Service Star BBM* and *Public Service Medal, PBM*.

He has also received awards from foreign governments: *Order of the Hashemite* from the Kingdom of Jordan; *Pablo Neruda Award* from the Government of Chile.

It is all about a boy from a rubber estate...



"My father came from Andhra Pradesh and he never returned. He got a job on a rubber plantation near Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia as a clerk because he was English-educated, otherwise he would have been a rubber tapper. What he did do for us was that he educated all of us children which gave us mobility. So I joined university near KL and then I came here to Singapore. So it's all about a boy from a rubber estate rising to the position of representing his country in a regional stage. That's just a small example. We have had people like Mr Rajaratnam our first foreign minister, whose ancestors hailed from Sri Lanka...and there are so many others." The Indian Heritage Centre at Campbell Lane has galleries that provides many other examples of other members of the Indian Diaspora said Mr Kesavapany who was also the Deputy Chairman of the Centre's Cultural Committee.

and Manmohan Singh's time. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a vision with the retitled "Act East" policy of how SE Asia's Indian communities can be beneficial to the Indian economy. So some programmes have been devised but again it's up to the local Indians here to take these up - things like investing in India.

One result of this new emphasis the sub-continent has for this part of the world, he says, is reflected in geographical terminology, "There is a new term - Indo-Pacific. The difference is very important as it shifts the focus away from Japan and China. Maybe partly because of the growth of China, and also the considerable growth of India's importance."

He says it should not be that surprising as ASEAN is one of the most prosperous regions in the world. By 2025 Indonesia, for example, is projected to be the world's 5th largest economy with a population of nearly 200 million people, a lot of infrastructure will be needed and it also has a lot of investment potential. The first couple of important steps that must first happen, said Mr Kesavapany, is a mindset change and a free trade agreement between India and ASEAN.

"The mindset in India must change. Everything cannot be just for yourself, you have got to share and share alike. So the India-Asean free trade agreement, which has been in negotiating mode for several years has to be completed as the key component of this economic cooperation."

Singapore has always been supporting India in ASEAN and with Singapore as the Asean Chair in 2018, does he think Singapore can leverage and intensify growth and development between the two countries? He paints a background that augurs well for positive affirmative action, "We have always been very positive about India. There was a time when the late PM Lee Kuan Yew used to be very frustrated with the slow pace of growth so he used to say "Wake up India! Wake up!"

However, Singapore's second prime minister, Mr Goh Chock Tong, kept faith with India, "He ignited "India Fever", which highlighted India's potential not only to Singaporeans but also to the rest of ASEAN, Asia and the world. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has returned the compliment paying special attention to ASEAN by the invitation to all 10 ASEAN heads of states to attend India's Republic Day celebrations on 26 January in New Delhi," explained Kesavapany

Now India has woken up and there is this great urge to take advantage of what is happening. That's why the Indian-Asean Pravasi meet was held here in Singapore. By the way, the Singapore Indian Association was given the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Award by the government of India. for services rendered to the Indian community in 2016."

"So, there is a lot of to and fro, and in terms of tourism Singapore has been described as the "best domestic airport of India". You have 400 flights per

week - that's a huge number of flights. And Indians, many of them, are coming through Singapore to take cruises; sometimes the only passengers on these cruises are Indian!"

He also agreed that the reverse could be done in India if Singaporeans could go there and open market-hawker centres and coffee shops and they would do very well, "Yes! If you strengthen the cultural connections, the business connections and the political connections, it would be good, because in general, India and ASEAN have no problems with each other. We have no disputes over land. We see India as a growing power which can do good for the world. However, we share one common problem, the rise of extremism. That is something we can combine our efforts to try and work things out. Recently, Indian ships were seen in Changi Naval base, which for some reason did not happen earlier. So you can see its importance, it's a reflection of the change in perception about the Indo-Pacific—that the Indian Ocean is equally important as the Pacific Ocean."

Ultimately, he felt that any coming together of people is a positive thing because they get to understand each other's point of view, open up to each other and see what is there to share - in economic, security and cultural terms, in cultural terms, "That's why the programme of the Indo-Pacific encompasses many aspects, not just economy... there's friendship, there's respect for each other. So it's a very multi-faceted approach."

"We have always been very positive about India. There was a time when the late PM Lee Kuan Yew used to be very frustrated with the slow pace of growth so he used to say "Wake up India! Wake up!" Now India has woken up and there is this great urge to take advantage of what is happening... Singapore has been described as the best domestic airport of India. You have 400 flights per week - that's a huge number of flights."

Indian Diaspora

The Indian diaspora has undoubtedly contributed to Singapore's success and proved to be mutually beneficial as Mr Kesavapany pointed out, "We took advantage of the opportunities that came our way, we educated our children, trained them well. Look at any professions and they are there... legal...medical. The Indian diaspora has performed well." For himself, the former diplomat was very satisfied and grateful for a career, in diplomacy, in particular one milestone that he played a large part in. He shared that life as a diplomat was, "Generally very pleasant, very productive. Of course, you come into situations where you have to use all your wits. I was lucky to be in a position in Geneva, where I was the ambassador to the WTO and helped to set up and elected to be its first Chairman."

As to whether the diplomatic profession is still as effective as in the past, Mr Kesavapany gave an emphatic yes. "Oh, very much so. With diplomacy you can control, manage and shape. But once you decide I'm going to throw the first bomb, then the other person throws the second bomb and things start escalating... there is no end to it."

Mr Kesavapany keeps busy with being on the board of several organisations but one organisation he feels that is important and works on creating a more cohesive society. It is just as relevant today as when it was founded almost 70 years ago - Singapore's Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO). He is the current head of the IRO and it has a challenging and formidable task. "This was started way before radicalization or extremism was even thought of. In 1949, a group of public spirited individuals decided it was a good idea to set up an inter-faith organisation. In Singapore we have developed this habit of various religions co-operating together and to manage any issues that may arise from time to time. Over the years that's how it has

been. But once radicalization come into the picture, then we saw the need to be even more cohesive. So one of the things that the IRO is doing since mid-2017 is to make the organisation more relevant to the times and reach out to people who have strayed. You need to go into the heartlands to spread the message of peace and harmony."

To the question whether he has a 'favourite' among all the hats he is wearing, he fondly recalls the work accomplished by another distinguished member of the diaspora, "I am a committee member of the Dyslexic Association which was set up 25 years ago by the late Dr Jimmy Daruwala who came from Mumbai and settled down here in Singapore. We were both members of the Rotary Club of Raffle City, so we thought we'd take up this social cause. If you do not address the problem of dyslexia, 10% of children here will be handicapped. We started with zero and raised awareness in the families of these children. We had to overcome many challenges and today we have 13 centres all over Singapore. I'm very proud of having worked with the late Dr Daruwallah. So this is another example of how the Indian diaspora made a difference to the lives of 10,000 families, because it is not just the child, it's the entire family which is involved."

Speaking of family, he also shared that his wife, Padmini, was also from Malaysia and that, "We have two children, Murli is a lawyer and Sashi is in the research field in neuroscience. My daughter-in-law, Dr Jodhi Mayall is an educator and Shashi's wife, Geetha is an analyst at PLATTS. We have two grandchildren: S. Kishan (age 11) and S. Jaynna (9). I am 81 now. I try and relax. I leave home around 10 am. I am involved with IRO, and the Lee Kuan Yew School where I give talks and besides this, SINDA the Singapore-Indian Development Association and the Hindu Endowments Board. My wife says it is more than enough."

Looking towards the future challenges, he reminds Singaporeans the island republic has overcome over many difficult hurdles in the past, "Fifty years ago when we gained independence no one gave us a ghost of a chance to make it. We had \$500 million in our kitty, no natural resources, people were undernourished, there was 13% employment and we were dependent on a neighbouring country for potable water. But one by one we overcame the challenges and now we have come to a stage where we are considered one of the top five richest countries in the world. Do we stand still? Or do we go backwards like other city states like Athens and Sparta? So, it's not a God-given thing that Singapore will be strong, forever stable and prosperous."

For Singapore to stay competitive and grow, what is important he said is that it must remain a corrupt-free society, a cohesive society that should not quarrel over language, race or religion. He also said, "That's where education comes in. You have to educate your people, give them future skills. We already have an organization called Future Skills to address this, because the skills of 10-12 years ago are not all applicable today."

While these fundamentals have served Singapore well, he also admits that other changes have taken place in society. "In 1965 when we became independent it was a battle of survival. So there were certain things the government could do and people would accept them without questioning. But once you have the basic needs of housing, jobs and education for kids have been secured, people want other things...the freedom to speak out, freedom to question ...to say why this can or cannot be done. So the government of the day has to take into account that rapid and dynamic changes are taking place and adopt/adapt accordingly. Society is changing and that it also has to change."

INDIA'S BUDDHIST TRAILS: ENLIGHTENING ODYSSEYS

By Raneer Sahaney

This great spiritual transformation has left us an astonishingly relevant touchstone of faith which has transcended geographic dynamics, regional diversities and societal issues of caste and creed



Mahaparinirvana Statue

As our world hurtles through a host of discordant notes on so many fronts, the relevance of Buddha's message of peace and harmonious existence could not be more appealing. The privileged prince who left his palatial life, in his father's home in Kapilvastu in Nepal, on a personal quest of spiritual enlightenment, himself suffered self-doubt and many trials and tribulations before reaching that blessed state of spiritual fulfillment under the Bodhi tree by the Niranjana River in Uruvela Village. This humble village now is the flourishing present-day Buddhist hub of Bodhgaya in the state of Bihar in India

The 'Great Awakening' which released him from the endless cycle of rebirths, has been pivotal to a great religious movement, which was spearheaded by India's great King Ashoka. The legendary monarch propagated the Buddha's teachings across his vast kingdom and beyond its shores. The buoyant elements of the Buddhist faith, which have stood the test of time down the centuries, have made it even more relevant in today's troubled world, and this charismatic and transforming faith continues to spawn a following from all over the world to this

day across the entire subcontinent and large parts of South and Southeast Asia. Today Buddhism has evolved into three major branches: Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana. Nearing the end of his days the Buddha speaking to his beloved disciple Ananda, prevailed upon him to urge his (the Buddha's) growing community of followers to undertake a pilgrimage at the four places: Lumbini (Nepal), Bodhgaya (Bihar), Sarnath and Kushinagar (Uttar Pradesh), the cornerstones of his odyssey to the Great Awakening as a reminder of the difficulties he encountered along the way to reach that state of bliss which he had spent a lifetime seeking.

The present-day states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are home to the holiest destinations of this faith and are a magnet for devotees from these three streams of faith. Buddha's teaching is enshrined in the concept of the four noble truths and the three jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) through the 8-fold path to salvation and peace. Individual effort and not ritual reliance on a superhuman being or an external agency, he believed would be the road to solving the age-old riddles of spiritual fulfillment.

A century after the Buddha's mahaparinirvana this spiritual landscape witnessed the emergence of several branches of Buddhist thought rooted in the Buddha's original precepts. This included the Mahayana School and the Theravada School (rooted in the old Hinayana School) which spread from Sri Lanka to many Southeast Asian countries; the Vajrayana School with its Tantric influences, perpetuated by Guru Padmasambhava in the 8th century, spread across the Himalayan regions of India, Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet. A rich cornucopia of symbolic structures such as sculpted caves, stupas, chaityas, viharas, mahaviharas, and numerous art forms and religious literature evolved from all these developments.

The Lu Mountain Temple at Rosemead, Southern California, was the venue for what is believed to be the largest collection of Buddhist relics in the US; amongst these 10,000 relics of the historical founder of the Buddhist faith, Shakyamuni Buddha are a rare tooth relic, one of the few teeth of the Buddha existing in the world. Most of these relics were acquired in Vietnam, and originated from temples in Myanmar and Thailand. They were donated in early 2013 by two Vietnamese Buddhist disciples.

Bihar's Buddhist Circuit

In anticipation of his death in his 80th year Buddha urged his followers to continue his work after his imminent Mahaparinirvana – and as a reminder of the hardships on the journey to salvation and peace, prevailed upon them to visit Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, and Kushinara, the cornerstones of his odyssey to Enlightenment. The state of Bihar is home to a significant number of destinations related to the spiritual quest of Lord Buddha.

Bodhgaya

A living center of Buddhist worship and sacred veneration the Mahabodhi Mahavihara Temple, a UNESCO-acclaimed World Heritage Site today, has acquired global significance with the rise in Buddhist devotees from the world over. The original temple, built on the site of was commissioned in the 3rd century by the Mauryan king, Ashoka who propagated his new found faith beyond Indian shores. A parikrama of the sacred stations of the Mahabodhi Temple, including the sacred Bodhi Tree (a sapling of which was sent to (Sri) Lanka under the instructions of Ashoka and is worshipped there by the Buddhist community to date) is intrinsic to a devotional visit to the site which features the colossal gilded figure of the 10th century seated Buddha in bhumisparsha mudra. The Vajrasthal - The Diamond Throne, marking the exact place of that life-transforming event was commissioned by the king.

Rajgir

About 80km away from Bodhgaya lies Rajgir, home to the Sattapanni Cave the site of the 1st Council, after the Buddha's passing, held to codify the canonical texts of his teachings for the first time. It also served as the monsoon retreat for the Buddha for around 12 years with his disciples, where he meditated and gave sermons on Griddhikuta—the Hills of the Vultures. You can visit the Vishwa Shanti Stupa, accessible by ropeway, which was set up by the Japanese, and accessible by ropeway. Important attractions here are the Maradakukshi Vihara, Jivakamravna Vihara and ruins of Bimbisara's jail, the Venuvan Vihara and the ruins of the Ajatshatru Fort located on the Nalanda Road. The Rajgir Festival is an annual affair.



(Top): Rajgir
(Left): Excavated ruins of Nalanda Mahavihara

Nalanda

Multitudes of visitors have over the years visited the UNESCO-acclaimed World Heritage Site of the Nalanda University Ruins Archaeological Complex — a mighty sprawl of redbrick structures, ruined stupas and viharas amidst a sea of landscaped gardens. Nalanda (60km from Bodhgaya) was one of ancient Asia's most important academic hubs. In 246 BCE it was the venue of the 3rd Buddhist Council. Nalanda's university (estb. 5th century) was the first major residential international university, and supported 2,000 teachers and 10,000 monks and students from all over the Buddhist world. Its massive library was legendary. Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavira also came here several times. Luminaries who studied here included the likes of Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and Santarakshita as well as Guru Padamasambhava, the father of Tibetan Buddhism, and Chinese scholar and traveller Huiyen Tsang.

In 1193 the Turkish raider Bakhtiyar Khalji sacked the university town and its famous library was scattered and burnt to the ground. Of interest here is Sariputra's Stupa. Much of Nalanda still awaits discovery. The Nava Nalanda Mahavihara was initiated by the Indian government in 1961 as "a Magadh Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Pali and allied language and Buddhist learning".

Vaishali

Travel about 5km from Rajgir to Vaishali, which was visited both by Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavira who established Jainism. Buddha preached his last sermon here. Star attractions are the ruins of a once grand complex marked by the soaring Ashoka Pillar and Relic Stupa 1 featuring remains of the Buddha enshrined by the Lichhavi princes who were his followers. The second Buddhist Council was held at Vaishali. Of interest is also the fact that it was for the first time women too were ordained into the sangha.

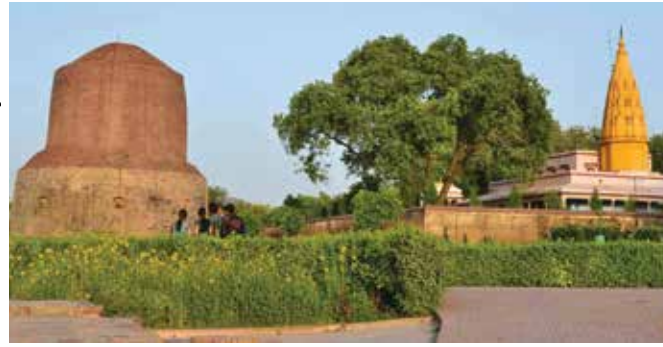
Festivals Celebrating The Enlightened One

The Buddha Purnima Festival celebrates Buddha's birth, which took place on the full moon day of Hindu month of Vaishakh—April/May. The Bodh Mahaotsav, organized by Bihar Tourism and Government of Bihar annually is held in the month of February celebrates the Buddha's Enlightenment. It attracts thousands of devotees from home and abroad where Buddhism thrives. The day is marked by prayers and meditation as well as processions, exhibitions and cultural performances from India, Thailand, Bhutan, Sri Lanka etc. The Kalachakra —Festival for World Peace is held in January. The 10 day festivities are presided over by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.



(Above): Rambhar Stupa;
(above right): Sarnath

Photo: Anandajoti Bhikkhu



Kapilvastu (Nepal) took ill and stopped at Kushinagar where he gained mahaparnirvana. The Rambhar Stupa marks the site of his cremation in 543 BCE. Eight stupas were used to preserve Buddha's mortal remains. The Mahaparinirvana Temple features a massive reclining Buddha, recovered here in 1876. Both the Nirvana Stupa and Chaitya lie behind this

site. The Buddha Purnima festival attracts many visitors.

Sravasti

Located 150km drive from Lucknow, Sravasti was much favoured as a monsoon retreat by Buddha. Sravasti's importance lies in the fact that it is here that Buddha is said to have performed his first miracle to silence his critics. Of interest here is the Jetavana Monastery which draws many devotees today to its many shrines, stupas and monasteries. Also of importance here are the Anandabodhi Tree, the ruins of Anandakutti and Gandhakuti viharas and the Angulimala stupa.

Kapilvastu (Piparwah)

Just 146 km from from Sravasti lies Kapilvastu (present-day Piprahwa), capital of the Shakya clan over whom Buddha's father King Suddhodhan ruled. This is important for Buddha's early life as Prince Siddhartha Gautama, before he left the palace aged 29 on a journey of spiritual fulfillment. His relics are preserved in the large stupa here. Only the palace ruins at Ganvaria village recall those momentous times. The great viharas here was built by Buddhist devotees.

Kaushambi

Located 60km from Allahabad Kaushambi reminds us of the several visits Buddha made here in the 6th and 9th year after attaining Nirvana. Of interest here is the Ashoka Pillar and Ghoshitaram Monastery and Digambar Jain Temple.

Across the country are also many sites closely associated with the spread of Buddhism from its earliest days.

The Rambhar Stupa marks the site of Buddha's cremation in 543 BCE. Eight stupas were used to preserve his mortal remains



(Above): Mahabodhi in Bodhgaya

Uttar Pradesh Buddhist Circuit

Sarnath and Kushinagar - these venerable places lie in the neighbouring state of Uttar Pradesh. The former is associated with the beginning of Buddha's journey to preach his new doctrine of faith, the latter, where he ended his earthly journey. Other Buddhist sites of importance in the state are Kapilvastu, Kauhambi and Sankisa.

Sarnath

On attaining Nirvana Buddha left Bodhgaya and went back to Kashi (Varanasi) seeking his old companions with whom he wished to share his life-changing experience. They all retired to the nearby deer park at Sarnath, where Buddha went on to set up his first group of disciples and gave his first sermon - dharmachakrapravartna - setting in motion the wheel of law. Buddha was to return to Sarnath many times. Points of interest here are the Mulgandhakuti Vihara, and (inside the Archaeological and Excavation Area) the Dharmarajika Stupa and the Dhamek Stupa (which marks the spot of Buddha's first sermon). Dating to the Gupta period Chaukhandi Stupa commemorates the place where Buddha met with his first sangha. Also worth a visit is the Sarnath Museum. The Sarnath lion capital, rescued from the broken Ashoka pillar, has been adapted as a national symbol of Independent India. Commemorative temples have been set up here by several Buddhist nations whose devotees also come in great numbers for the annual Bodhotsav festivities.

Kushinagar

Lord Buddha while journeying home to

Of Viharas and Pagodas

A host of Buddhist countries have set up their own pagodas and temples in Bodhgaya. This includes the Tibetan Monastery (biggest and oldest), the Burmese Vihara by the banks of River Niranjana, the Thai Monastery (with golden rooftops and paintings related to the Buddha's life), the Chinese Temple (with three golden Buddha statues), the Royal Bhutan Monastery (with clay carvings on its inner walls), the Vietnamese Temple (with a serene statue of Avalokiteswara).



(Left): Buddha statue at Ajanta Caves. (Below): Udayagiri Caves

Sacred Sites in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Odisha

Sanchi

India's legendary monarch the Mauryan emperor Ashoka was Buddhism's greatest advocate in the Indian sub-continent. After his conversion to Buddhism, in the wake of the bloody battle of Kalinga (Odisha), Ashoka established a slew of structures across his vast kingdom to promote his new faith. Just 70 km from state capital Bhopal lie the archaeological remains of one of India's most important Buddhist pilgrimage sites - the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Sanchi. This is home to early and late Ashoka-era stupas, relic boxes, columns, shrines, monasteries, decorative gateways, sculptures and bas reliefs. Of interest here is to 'The Great Stupa' (Stupa I), the first stupa ever commissioned by the Emperor Ashoka (3 BCE). The Ashokan Pillar was capped by a capital of four sculpted lions. The lion represents the Sakyasimha lion of Buddha's Sakya clan, the elephant symbolizes the Buddha himself.

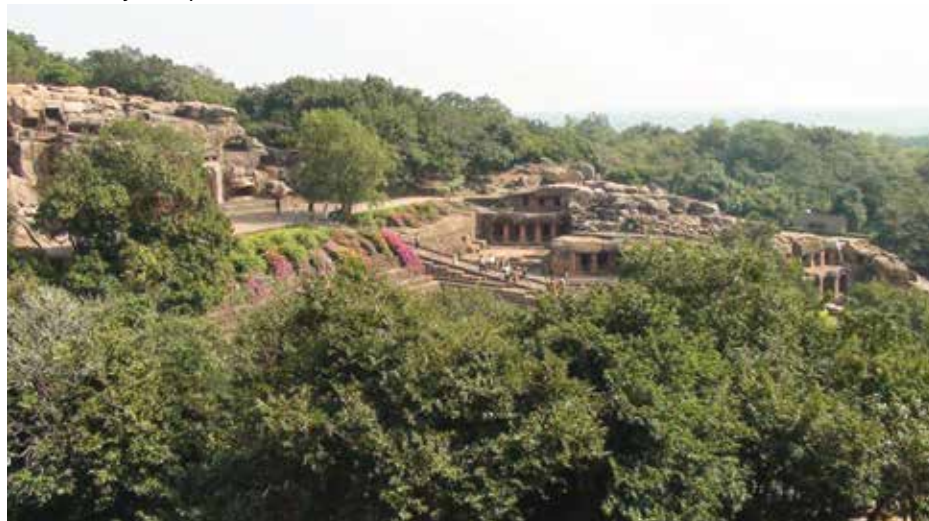
Bharhut

The mighty stupa here was said to have once been a fitting rival for the Sanchi stupa in magnificence.

Ajanta Caves

An accidental discovery in the 19th century, the Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra have been inspirational and edifying destinations for millions of visitors and devotees for fabulous mint-fresh paintings marked by subjects drawn from the Buddhist pantheon and literature.

The **Pithalkhora, Bhaja and Karla Caves** feature Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhist- dominated art. At **Amravati** streams of devotees are drawn to India's tallest stupa, the 2nd BCE, 95-ft high Mahachaitya Stupa.



Ratnagiri-Udaigiri-Lalitgiri-Langudi

Set off on Odisha's Diamond Triangle tour which brings you to some of India's most important Buddhist sites marking the impact of Buddha's spiritual legacy. From the Dhauli Plain with its Shanti Stupa, devotees go on to explore the Buddhist archeological sites of Ratnagiri-Udaigiri-Lalitgiri-Langudi, which feature works of Buddhism from the 6th century on. Stupas and sculptures, viharas and chaityas lie scattered across these amazing sites.

MAHAPARNIRVANA EXPRESS The Buddhist Circuit Tourist Train

An excellent way to explore the Buddha trail is by the Mahaparnirvana Express or the Buddhist Circuit Tourist Train, launched in 2007. It stops at the traditional key points of Buddha's lifetime journey from Lumnini in Nepal to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in India. The 7N/8D journey of the train, leaving once or twice a month from New Delhi's Safdarjung Railway Station covers— Gaya/Bodhgaya - Rajgir - Nalanda -Varanasi/ Sarnath- Khusinagar - Lumbini - Sravasti - Agra - Delhi. TIP Foreign nationals need a Nepali double/multiple entry visa for Lumbini at the border so keep two passport-size photographs handy.

Welcome to the Age of the **Smart School**

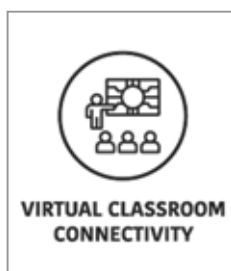
Global Indian International School outlines the five-step approach to NextGen learning



Remember the time when schools were standard size classrooms with wooden furniture, basic facilities, a single teacher and textbook-heavy learning? Education, back then, was designed to meet the needs of the time and equip children to take on the challenges of the future.

Now, times have changed, the education sector has expanded, schools have evolved and expectations of students have grown. A 21st century school does not just need advanced learning materials, it also needs the newest tools and innovative methodology to give learners and educators the right ambience for assimilation and dissipation of knowledge.

Keeping in mind these needs of the time, the Global Indian International School has designed its 21st century SMART Campus with five state-of-the-art focus areas: Virtual classrooms, Sports Analytics, Innovation and Entrepreneurship labs, Facial recognition for safety and Green Initiatives. These features and facilities are devised provide conditions suitable for the well being of the students in the present and derive learning outcomes



relevant to their success in future. The most important and digitally savvy facility in our SMART Campus is the Virtual Classroom. It is

either a web-based or a software-based learning environment, which uses social media tools to allow learners and instructors to interact through virtual discussion boards. They can also be distance-learning platforms which will eliminate the four walls of a traditional classroom and provide unlimited learning space to our students through connectivity with peers and experts on the other side of the globe.

When such tools are in place, students will be able to incorporate course materials, homework, as well as tests into a single place, making learning an easier process.



But, NextGen learning is not limited to academics alone. Sports and other skills are now part of the pedagogy.

Technology has progressed to a point where it is possible to capture a player's on-field performance, analyse it, break it down and then use the data to enhance his/her future game.



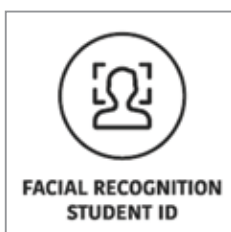
Using digital data to help hone and polish students' sporting skills, like professional sporting clubs

We have made use of this feature in our SMART Campus, where the Sports Performance Enhancing Data Analytics System, or SPEDAS, will be in place. SPEDAS, used to digitally map players and ball movement, will be employed at our indoor basketball court for a start. This NBA-level technology will require students to use sensors during intra-school or inter-school competitions, so that data collected during the game can be analyzed later to improve their performance.



NextGen learning also promotes innovation and encourages entrepreneurship.

Over the last decade, the world economy has changed rapidly thanks to one breed of individuals who strode into our lives and changed the way we do everyday things. The disruptors, by the power of their imagination and self-belief, have made life easier in this millennium. Banking is no longer a long wait before the cashier's desk, taxis are being hailed from the comfort of one's sofa, and shopping is just click of the button away. These systems are the product of an innovative idea which was nurtured as a seed and allowed to grow into a huge tree that is now providing shade to all. This is exactly what our Global Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship is all about. It is a space where our students are groomed to be innovators and entrepreneurs in the belief that their idea will one day change the world.



Our SMART Campus is also a place where students and staff deserve to feel safe and secure in their learning environment. One

way we do so is through use of systems like facial recognition and positioning systems which will keep track of everyone who is present on the premise. Close circuit cameras will be in place, supported by a solid wireless

technology, to ensure that the 33,000 sqm premise is completely secure for everyone.



But amidst all this technology talk we have not overlooked one very important aspect - our social responsibility.

The sprawling campus has a long list of green initiatives put specifically in place to ensure reduced carbon footprint.

Lush, green surroundings cover the premises, giving the campus a pleasing environment, while the school building itself is shaped like a nest allowing ample sunlight and natural breezes to stream into the classrooms and learning areas. Architects from New York to Japan took cues from Mother Nature to create the "Nest", which is a metaphor for an environment where students are sheltered and nurtured as they grow into birds capable of flying off into the open skies.

All this makes our GIIS SMART Campus a new age school that is the need of the hour. Our aim is to spread and replicate our ideas around the world for the benefit of more and more students to make them global citizens of the future.



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MEDIA

Asia Pacific Media Boom in Indian Channels

Tripta Singh, Executive Vice President at Zee TV APAC, describes where the diaspora goes, the entertainment-cultural feeds must follow

You have been witness to the changing scene of Indian media in Singapore. Could you please share something of your journey in this context?

Zee TV has been the first Hindi channel to be available in Singapore since 1995 when StarHub (erstwhile SCV) had launched. Subsequently, Zee TV launched a localised feed for the APAC region in June 2004. The launch of the localised feed opened up the South Asian Advertising Pie in Singapore and I can proudly say that Zee was at the helm of this. Today there are more than 20 Hindi channels, multiple print options, radio along with websites that are catering to South Asian audiences in this market alone. Zee itself has 6 channels here, namely: Zee TV APAC, Zee TV HD, Zee Cinema, Zee News, &TV and Zee Tamil.

Tell us about your Network and its reach in the region.

Zee Network is the largest Indian Entertainment Network, having started its journey in 1992 in India. As a network we have just completed 25 years! In the Asia-Pacific region our outreach is to more than 10 million viewers across 18 countries. Launched in June 2004, ZEE TV APAC happens to be the Asia-Pacific feed of the Flagship channel - ZEE TV (India). The channel showcases a variety of genres for all audiences, including prime time drama series, comedy, reality shows and children's programs.

The entire channel is subtitled in English and caters to audiences in the region with localised promotions and timing. With an enviable Hindi Film library, the channel also offers viewers the latest and best of Bollywood.

ZEE TV APAC is the most watched Hindi Channel in Singapore. The city-state is home to one of the largest overseas Indian populations and its variety programming is watched by Indians and now increasingly, Malay audiences, locally. Almost half of ZEE TV APAC viewers have a HHI range, which ranges between SGD 4,000 - 10,000

per month. ZEE TV APAC continues to dominate the Hindi General Entertainment Channel content category across all affiliate platforms. ZEE TV APAC is distributed in more than 30 platforms across the region amongst them Singtel and StarHub in Singapore, I-Cable and NOW TV in Hong Kong, Fetch TV and Vision Asia in Australia, Sky Cable in Philippines and SkyNet in Myanmar etc.



With the advent of social media, traditional media, even television, is losing its market share. How is Zee keeping its present portfolio relevant to the changing user preference?

The prospect of a shifting landscape is challenging; however, it is imperative to note that content is the key and therefore



content can now not only be viewed via traditional television but can also be accessed across a range of devices. There is research to prove that content consumption overall has increased due to the intake via various devices. Here in Singapore and other local territories, we have started producing local content that involves viewers to be a part of the show. This has been very well received as engagement with local audiences has gone up tremendously.

What opportunities do you see for Indian channels in Singapore?

With the growing South Asian diaspora in Singapore and the region, the demand for content from back home remains strong and buoyant. The latest research from MPA shows that the Asia-Pacific pay-TV industry remains revenue generative and scalable in 2018 as well. Our focus in the region will be to continuously entertain and engage with local audiences via all platforms, be it television, digital or on ground events.

What's on the cards for 2018?

Apart from periodic launches of new shows on the channels, we are looking at launching an English News Channel in the region; this is the newest baby in our stable back home. The channel is called WION or World is One News and is India's first global news channel. We have recently launched our digital product Zee5 in India and will soon be launched across APAC. Zee5 will offer viewers a completely integrated entertainment offering with both on-demand and live TV.

Closer home we will continue to dabble with local shows such as Antakshari, Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, Make It Snappy, Wellness Mantra and Sur Taal Sangam. Not only do these shows create platforms for local talent they also provide opportunities for talent to grow exponentially in these markets.

LARGEST INDIAN ENTERTAINMENT NETWORK IN ASIA-PACIFIC



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Singtel TV Ch 646



StarHub Ch 130



StarHub Ch 165



StarHub Ch 138
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Amber Fort, Rajasthan, 16th Century AD

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*Subject to TOP and all other regulatory approvals.

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