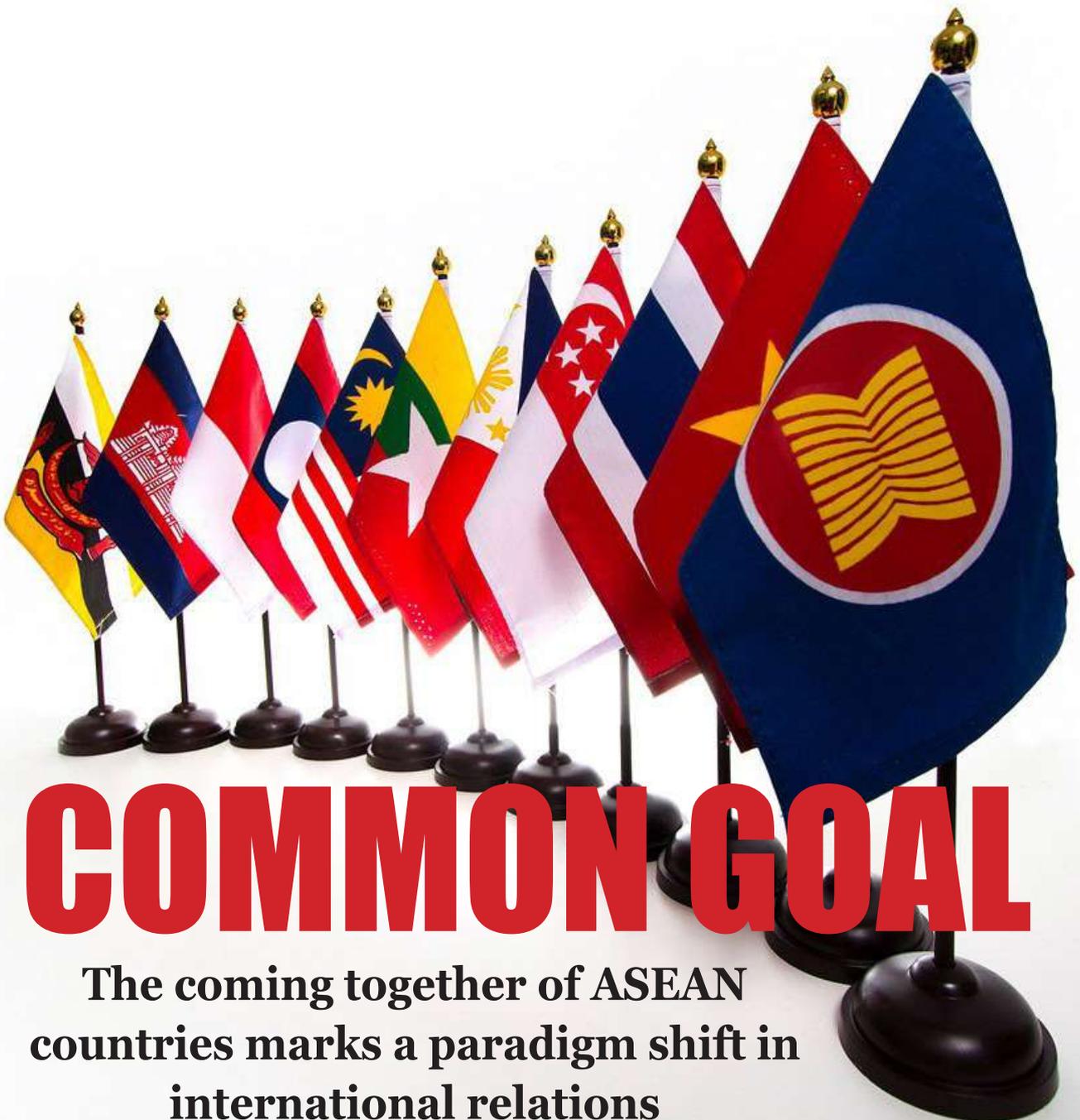


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## COMMON GOAL

The coming together of ASEAN countries marks a paradigm shift in international relations



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## ASEAN - Aggressive diplomacy of a perceived soft state

India's 69th Republic day function was planned in advance for securing massive diplomatic edge over India's strategic challenger China. The time for big-ticket diplomacy with Asean to counter China's hegemony was staged in an unprecedented convergence of 10 heads of state or governments from Asean for the 69th Republic Day parade to showcase the groups' the growing solidarity with India. Former PM PV Narsimha Rao's 'Act East Policy' is put to practice brilliantly by PM Narendra Modi is India's answer to the rapid geopolitical transformation in the Indo-Pacific region and the presence of ten Asean leaders to commemorate India's vibrant democracy and cultural diversity will not be lost, particularly in Asia. The presence of all the major countries head of states meant that they see India as the alternate Asian power in the region and the unilateral dominance of



China is softly balanced by India.

China's distinctly hegemonic moves in the last few years in the South China Sea and its growing assertiveness has made Asean look towards India as a 'partner' for equilibrium. Despite FTA in services and investments with India, Asean's trade in 2016-17 was only \$70 billion, in comparison to the \$470 billion trade with China. Asean economies depend upon China for survival but the members are uncomfortable with it. The full potential of India-Asean relations is yet to be tapped. Culture, which can provide strong binding force, has been neglected for too long despite the rhetoric. The neglect of Bodh Gaya, the holiest of place for Buddhist pilgrims, is baffling. The Nalanda University Project has been a disappointment. ASEAN, on its part, should be more ambitious with defence and security cooperation with India. Can India think of exporting its Light Combat Aircraft and other defence equipment to ASEAN? India should propose solid, concrete projects for defence cooperation and deliver on them. The revival of the India-Australia-US-Japan Quad in the context of Indo-Pacific reflects India's move towards extending its 'Act East Policy' beyond ASEAN. To reassure the grouping, India has been careful in emphasising ASEAN's centrality in Indo-Pacific. What do ASEAN countries think of 'Indo-Pacific' idea? There should be a serious dialogue with the member nations on this. The "Indo Pacific diplomatic terminology is coined by President Trump to dilute "south China sea" reference.

If China scares ASEAN, the US confuses them. The unilateral withdrawal of the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership has left many ASEAN members even more dependent on China which is moving rapidly to fill the vacuum left by the US withdrawal. They see erosion in the US influence in the region and its capability to stand up to China. India will have to show ambition and capacities and ASEAN will have to shed its hesitations vis-a-vis India in the security arena. New areas of cooperation, particularly, in science and technology, space security, food security, cyber security, need to be explored. The Republic day parade is a good occasion to give a new direction to the India Asean cooperation and announce some big ticket India will have to show ambition and capacities and ASEAN will have to shed its hesitations vis-a-vis India in the security arena. New areas of cooperation, particularly, in science and technology, space security, food security, cyber security, need to be explored. The Republic day parade is a good occasion to give a new direction to the India Asean cooperation and announce some big ticket In 1967 India was offered the membership of ASEAN but it declined because ASEAN was seen as an instrument of cold war politics. With the situation changed, India should make a bid for it if ASEAN membership opens up. This may help to deal with the turbulence in Indo-Pacific better. Some people are already discussing this possibility. The potential of the Indo Pacific region is tremendous and it is a diplomatic tool to build India in a global power.

—Prashant Tewari , Editor-in-Chief

COVER STORY

## MARKING A PARADIGM SHIFT

OF SHARED VALUES,  
COMMON DESTINY



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My Lord



**20** UP AGAINST  
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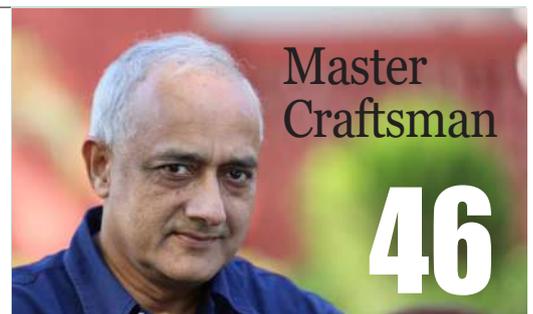


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High Impact girl  
Rakul is southern  
heartthrob



# Govt banks big time on Modicare

‘No reimbursement scheme, it will be cashless’

**F**inance minister Arun Jaitley said that the world’s biggest health cover plan announced in the Union Budget will be cashless and not a reimbursement scheme, and promised more funds if required depending on the rollout later next financial year.

The National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) touted as ModiCare envisaged to provide medical cover of up to Rs 5 lakh to over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families, constituting 40% of the population.

“It takes care of hospitalisation, the secondary and tertiary care. Obviously, it will involve various state hospitals and selected private hospitals. It can be on trust model, it can be on insurance model. It’s not on reimbursement model because too many complaints come on the reimbursement model,” he said.

The model is now being worked out between the NITI Aayog and the health ministry, he said, adding that the date of implementation would be next financial year and sometime in the course of

the year it will be worked out.

If assuming the model to be insurance led, the premium shrink with the increase in number of policy holders, he said at an event organised by a magazine. The scheme although appreciated by experts also raises apprehension about its implementation and the initial corpus of just Rs 2,000 crore.

Assuring that the scheme will be entirely state funded, Jaitley said initial funds of Rs 2,000 crore has been allocated and whatever funds required, as the scheme rolls over, would be made available.

“In the coming year, I see more comfortable situation as far as revenues are concerned because the graphs as far as direct tax is concerned would move very fast,” he said.

Following demonetisation and implementation of Goods and Services Tax, the number of direct tax assesses have gone up ... once anti-evasion measures, I do expect a little bump up in the GST collection also. I don’t see revenue

going to be a major challenge in that,” he said.

Jaitley in the Budget speech said, “We are all aware that lakhs of families in our country have to borrow or sell assets to receive indoor treatment in hospitals. Government is seriously concerned about such impoverishment of poor and vulnerable families. Present RSBY provide annual coverage of only Rs 30,000 to poor families.”

Several state governments have also implemented supplemented health protection schemes providing varying coverage, he had said in the Lok Sabha.

The finance minister also advocated that the central and the state government can pool in resources for health care to achieve efficiency.

He also emphasised on having better hospitals in rural areas even though Tier I and Tier II cities have good hospitals.

Setting up of hospitals in various districts is the state subject under the federal structure, he added.



# MARKING A PARADIGM SHIFT

The coming together of all 10 ASEAN heads as guests of honour for the Republic Day parade signals how regional powers like India have evolved to play a vital role in modern international architecture.



Srihari Avuthu

**R**eional organisations are increasingly becoming a vital feature of modern international architecture. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), which completed its golden jubilee recently in 2017, is a regional grouping of 10 separate nation-states — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. It was formed by five countries, which later extended to 10 members.

ASEAN also shares wide ranging partnerships with various other regional organisations and countries, such as India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and United States. It is the most institutionalised regional association in Asia and a classic example of successful regional multilateralism. Most importantly, it has not remained a mere talk shop, but has embraced economic integration and has, thereby, slowly transformed a once-impooverished Asean region with some war-torn countries into

a dynamic economic power house.

The combined Asean Gross Domestic Product rose from \$95 billion in 1970 to \$2.55 trillion in 2016 and is

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**ASEAN also shares wide ranging partnerships with various other regional organisations and countries, such as India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and United States. It is the most institutionalised regional association in Asia and a classic example of successful regional multilateralism.**

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expected to reach \$6.4 trillion by 2027. If it were a single entity, Asean would be ranked as the sixth largest economy in the world just behind the US, China, Japan, Germany, and the UK. France is also at about the same position. Asean is projected to emerge as the fourth largest economy in the world by 2050, with some describing it as the growth engine of the world.

All the first five Asean countries — Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore — which once suffered varying degrees of internal communist insurgencies, managed to surpass them. Asean's success has resulted in the fundamental transformation of geopolitics and geo-economics in Southeast Asia. Its diplomatic weight bears footprints not only in Southeast Asia and East Asia, but also in the broader Indo-Pacific region and in the global arena.

India-Asean partnership: India and Asean share geographical proximity and a robust people-to-people relationship which is deeply rooted in history and culture. On seeing deep cultural



imprints, Rabindranath Tagore, during his visit to Indonesia lamented, "I see India everywhere, but I do not recognise it." Even today, in Indonesia's capital Jakarta, statues placed at major traffic intersections depict figures from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Jefery Sng, a former diplomat based in Bangkok and Kishore Mahbubani, dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, in their jointly authored book, *The ASEAN Miracle: A Catalyst for Peace*, observe, "Many ordinary Southeast Asians are well acquainted with figures from, say, the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Yet, they would be surprised to learn that these figures, which they consider to be part of their heritage, come from India."

Perhaps no other country can match

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## Perhaps no other country can match India's long historical links with Southeast Asia. Ancient maritime trade routes had linked the Kalingas, Pallavas and the Cholas to Southeast Asia.

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India's long historical links with Southeast Asia. Ancient maritime trade routes had linked the Kalingas, Pallavas and the Cholas to Southeast Asia. Barring Vietnam and the Philippines, all other eight Asean countries share some sort of cultural roots in or exchanges with the Indian civilisation.

India's Look East Policy, articulated during the Government of PV Narasimha Rao, has been re-phrased and energised as 'Act East Policy' by the incumbent Government and its being

in full gear is visible from the Republic Day invite to all Asean leaders. That India-Asean partnership is on the upward trajectory is evident from the fact that the partnership had graduated from Sectoral Dialogue Partnership in 1992 to Full Dialogue Partnership in 1996 to Summit Level Partnership in 2002 and then to Strategic Partnership in 2012. ASEAN's home to about seven million Indian diaspora. All ASEAN countries are among the list of countries to which India's e-Visa facility is available. India



has set-up Asean-India Centre (AIC) in New Delhi in 2013 and a separate Asean diplomatic mission in Jakarta in 2015 in order to smoothly and speedily facilitate India's engagements with Asean. Currently, 30 different dialogue mechanisms, focusing on a range of sectors are operational.

**Mutually beneficial engagement:** India-Asean relations are mutually advantageous and beneficial on economic, cultural and strategic fronts. India-Asean economic ties are gradually deepening. Statistics of 2016 show, Asean was India's fourth largest trading partner, accounting for 10 per cent of India's total trade, whereas India was Asean's seventh largest trading partner. India's production linkages with Asean countries, especially with Malaysia in electronics, with Thailand in automobiles,

with Singapore in digital networks, are strengthening. There is rapid growth in India's textile trade with Vietnam.

India's mostly service oriented economy has got potential to complement the mostly manufacturing-based economy of Asean. India is a member of Asean led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which when implemented, is likely to cover 40 per cent of the world's population, 40 per cent of world trade and 33 per cent of global GDP. The Government of the State of Andhra Pradesh has availed support from Singapore in designing master plan of its upcoming new capital Amaravati and is also drawing collaboration with it for infrastructure development in its new capital city.

North-East India is looked at by some as being at the frontier of India

at a remote corner. But if South Asia and Southeast Asia are taken as a continuum, which is a geographical reality, then North-East India is right at the middle of it. India needs to tap this advantage to its full potential. Whereas over three million Indian tourists go to Asean countries every year, only about seven lakh tourists from Asean come to India.

China and Japan are more preferred tourist destinations for Asean people. With improved connectivity, geared up infrastructure, enhanced awareness, North-East India, with its charming tourist destinations, should be able to attract greater number of tourists from Asean countries. Potential for land based international connectivity is the highest in North-East. Borders must be made vibrant with land ports and North-East must be evolved as a hub of healthcare and education facilities besides tourism.

Both India and Asean are rich with diversity and nurture a culture of tolerance and co-existence. Ecosystem of peace provided by Asean and its live illustration of the culture of co-existence may hopefully help moderate the aggressive impulses of China, which has got economic interests in Asean. India and Asean collaboration would be promising in securing trade routes, ensuring freedom of navigation and sustaining a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific region in particular, which is vital for economic and security interests all stakeholders.

Republic Day invite to Asean: India has invited all heads of states of all 10 Asean countries to take part as chief guests in upcoming Republic Day parade on January 26. Except in 1956, 1968 and 1974, when India had two Republic Day guests, in all other years since 1950, there was only one chief guest each year. Hosting 10 heads of states as Chief Guests on Republic Day parade this year is a unique symbolic gesture, underlining the importance India attaches to further strengthening friendly relations with all Asean countries. New Delhi will also host an Asean-India commemorative summit on January 25, which marks the silver jubilee of the establishment of dialogue partnership between India and Asean. India-Asean partnership can play a vital role in shaping 21st century as the Asian century.

*(The writer is an advocate & Assistant Editor, India Foundation Journal. Views expressed are personal)*



# OF SHARED VALUES, COMMON DESTINY

The historic visit of 10 heads of ASEAN countries as guests of honour has opened new vistas in international relations

**O**n 26th January, 1.25 billion Indians had the honour to host 10 esteemed guests — leaders of ASEAN nations — at India's Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi. On Thursday, I had the privilege to host the ASEAN leaders for the Commemorative Summit to mark 25 years of ASEAN-India Partnership. Their presence with us is an unprecedented gesture of goodwill from ASEAN nations. Responding to this, on a winter morning, India has come out to greet them in a warm embrace of friendship.

This is no ordinary event. It is a historic milestone in a remarkable journey that has brought India and ASEAN in a deepening partnership of great promise for their 1.9 billion people, about one-fourth of human kind.

The India-ASEAN partnership may be just 25 years old. But, India's ties with Southeast Asia stretch back more than two millennia. Forged in peace and friendship, religion and

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More than two decades ago, India opened itself to the world with tectonic changes. And, with instincts honed over centuries, it turned naturally to the East. Thus began a new journey of India's reintegration with the East

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culture, art and commerce, language and literature, these enduring links are now present in every facet of the magnificent diversity of India and Southeast Asia, providing a unique envelope of comfort and familiarity between our people.

More than two decades ago, India opened itself to the world with tectonic changes. And, with instincts honed over centuries, it turned naturally to the East. Thus began a new journey of India's reintegration with the East. For India, most of our major partners and markets — from ASEAN and East Asia to North America — lie to the East. And, Southeast Asia and ASEAN, our neighbours by land and sea, have been the springboard of our Look East and, for the last three years, the Act East Policy.

Along the way, from dialogue partners, ASEAN and India have become strategic partners. We advance our broad-based partnership through 30 mechanisms. With each ASEAN member, we have growing diplomatic, economic and security partnership. We work together to keep our seas safe and secure. Our trade and investment flows have multiplied several times. ASEAN is India's fourth largest trading partner; India is ASEAN's seventh. Over 20 per cent of India's outbound investments go to ASEAN. Led by Singapore, ASEAN is India's leading source of investments. India's free trade agreements

in the region are its oldest and among the most ambitious anywhere.

Air links have expanded rapidly and we are extending highways deep into continental Southeast Asia with new urgency and priority. Growing connectivity has reinforced proximity. It has also put India among the fastest growing sources of tourism in Southeast Asia. Over a 6 million strong Indian diaspora in the region — rooted in diversity and steeped in dynamism — constitutes an extraordinary human bond between us.

## Thailand

Thailand has emerged as an important trading partner of India in ASEAN and is also one of the important investors in India from ASEAN. Bilateral trade between India and Thailand has more than doubled over the last decade. Relations between India and Thailand are extensively spread across many areas. We are important regional partners linking South and Southeast Asia. We cooperate closely in the ASEAN, East Asia Summit and Bimstec (the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), as also in the frameworks of Mekong Ganga Cooperation, Asia Cooperation Dialogue and Indian Ocean Rim Association. Thailand Prime Minister's state visit to India in 2016 has made a long-lasting impact on bilateral relations.

The whole of India mourned with their Thai brothers and sisters the demise of the great and popular King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The people of India also join the friendly people





of Thailand in praying for the long, prosperous and peaceful reign of the new king, His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun.

### **Vietnam**

The traditionally close and cordial relations have their historical roots in the common struggle for liberation from foreign rule and the national struggle for independence. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and President Ho Chi Minh led our peoples in the heroic struggle against colonialism. During the visit of Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc to India in 2007, we signed the strategic partnership agreement. This strategic partnership has grown into a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with my visit to Vietnam in 2016.

India's relations with Vietnam are marked by growing economic and commercial engagement. Bilateral trade between India and Vietnam has increased about 10 fold in 10 years. Defence cooperation has emerged as a significant pillar of strategic partnership between India and Vietnam. Science and technology is another important area of cooperation between India and Vietnam.

### **Myanmar**

India and Myanmar share a land-border of over 1,600 kms as well as a maritime boundary. Religious and cultural traditions flowing from our deep sense of kinship and our common Buddhist heritage bind us as closely as does our shared historical past. Nothing illuminates it more gloriously than the gleaming tower of Shwedagon Pagoda. The cooperation to restore Ananda Temple in Bagan with assistance of the Archaeological Survey of India also is emblematic of this shared heritage.

During the colonial period, political bonds were forged between our leaders, who displayed a great sense of hope and unity during our common struggle for independence. Gandhiji visited Yangon several times. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was deported to Yangon for many years. The clarion call of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose for India's Independence stirred the souls of many in Myanmar.

Our trade has more than doubled over the last decade. Our investment ties are also robust. Development cooperation has a significant role in India's relations with Myanmar. This assistance portfolio is presently worth over \$1.73 billion. India's transparent development cooperation is in line with Myanmar's national priorities and also builds synergy with the Master Plan of ASEAN Connectivity.





## Singapore

Singapore is a window to the heritage of India's ties to the region, the progress of the present and the potential of the future. Singapore was a bridge between India and ASEAN. Today, it is our gateway to the East, our leading economic partner and a major global strategic partner, which resonates in our membership in several regional and global forums.

Singapore and India share a strategic partnership. Our political relations are infused with goodwill, warmth and trust. Our Defence ties are among the strongest for both. Our economic partnership covers every area of priority for our two nations. Singapore is India's leading destination and source of investments. Thousands of Indian companies are registered in Singapore. Sixteen Indian cities have over 240 direct flights every week to Singapore. Indians make up the third-largest group of tourists in Singapore. Singapore's inspirational multiculturalism and respect for talent have nurtured a vibrant and dynamic Indian community that is contributing to deeper co-operation between our nations.

## Malaysia

The contemporary relations between India and Malaysia are quite extensive and spread across many areas. Malaysia and India share strategic partnership and we cooperate in a number of multilateral and regional fora. Malaysian Prime Minister's state visit to India in 2017 has made a long-lasting impact on the bilateral relations.

Malaysia has emerged as the third largest trading partner of India in ASEAN and is one of the important investors in In-

dia from ASEAN. Bilateral trade between India and Malaysia has increased more than two-fold in 10 years.

India and Malaysia have a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement since 2011. This Agreement is unique in the sense that both sides have offered ASEAN Plus commitments in trade in goods and have exchanged WTO Plus offers in trade in services. The Revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement between the two countries, signed in May 2012, and the MoU on Customs Cooperation, signed in 2013 further facilitate our trade and investment cooperation.





## Philippines

I had a very satisfying visit to the Philippines a little over two months ago. In addition to attending the ASEAN-India, EAS and related Summits, I had the pleasure of meeting President Duterte and we had extensive discussions on how to carry forward our warm and problem-free relationship. We are both strong in services and our growth rates are amongst the highest among major countries. Our business and trade potential holds great promise.

I laud President Duterte's commitment to bringing about inclusive development and to fighting corruption. These are areas where both countries can work together. We are happy to share our experience with the Philippines in universal ID cards, financial inclusion, making banking accessible to all, facilitating direct transfer of benefits, and in promoting cashless transactions. Making affordable medicines available to all is another priority area for the government of the Philippines that we are ready to contribute to. From Mumbai to Marawi, terrorism knows no boundaries. We are enhancing our cooperation with the Philippines in facing this common challenge.

## Brunei

Bilateral trade between India and Brunei has more than doubled over the last decade. India and Brunei share common membership of UN, NAM, Commonwealth, ARF, etc., and as developing countries with strong traditional and cultural ties, Brunei and India enjoy a fair degree of commonality in their perceptions on major international issues. The visit of the Sultan of Brunei to India in May 2008 was a landmark in India-Brunei relations. Vice-President of India visited Brunei in February 2016.





### **Lao PDR**

Relations between India and Lao PDR are extensively spread across many areas. India has been actively involved in power transmission and agricultural sectors in Lao PDR. Today, India and Lao PDR cooperate in a number of multilateral and regional fora.

While the trade between India and Lao PDR is still below potential, India has extended Duty Free Tariff Preference Schemes to Lao PDR, encourage exports of goods from Lao PDR to India. We also have immense opportunities in services trade that goes in building the economy of Lao PDR. Implementation of the ASEAN-India Services and Investment Agreement would help facilitate our services trade.

### **Indonesia**

Separated by a mere 90 nautical miles in the Indian Ocean, India and Indonesia share a continuity of civilisational relationship that spans over two millennia. Whether it is the annual Baliatra celebrated in Odisha or the legends of Ramayana and Mahabharata, which are visible across the entire landscape of Indonesia, these unique cultural threads umbilically bind the peoples of Asia's two largest democracies in a special neighbourly embrace.

“Unity in diversity” or *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* is also a key facet of the shared societal value structures that both countries celebrate, as also the common values of democracy and rule of law. Today, as

strategic partners, our cooperation spans across the entire gamut of political, economic, Defence & security, cultural and people-to-people fields. Indonesia continues to be our largest trading partner in ASEAN. Bilateral trade between India and Indonesia increased 2.5 times in the last ten years. President Joko Widodo's State visit to India in 2016 has made a long-lasting impact on the bilateral relations.





## Cambodia

The traditional and friendly relations between India and Cambodia are deeply rooted in civilisational ties. The magnificent structure of Angkor Wat temple is a glorious testimony and grand symbol of our ancient historical, religious and cultural links. India was proud to undertake restoration and preservation of Angkor Wat temple during the difficult period from 1986-1993.

India continues this valuable association in the ongoing restoration of Ta-Prohm temple. After the collapse of Khmer Rouge regime, India was the first country to recognise the new Government in 1981. India was also associated with the Paris Peace Accord and its finalisation in 1991. These traditional bonds of friendship have strengthened through regular exchange of high-level visits. We have expanded our cooperation in diverse fields such as institutional capacity building, human resource development, developmental and social projects, cultural exchanges, Defence cooperation, tourism and people-to-people contact.

In the ASEAN context, and on various global platforms, Cambodia is an important interlocutor and a supportive partner for India. India is committed to remain a partner in Cambodia's economic development and looks forward

to further deepen its traditional ties.

And, India and ASEAN are doing much more. Our partnership in ASEAN-led institutions like East Asia Summit, ADMM+ (the ASEAN Defence Ministerial Meeting Plus) and ARF (the ASEAN Regional Forum) are advancing peace and stability in our region. India is also an eager participant in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, seeking a comprehensive, balanced and fair agreement for all 16 participants.

The strength and resilience of partnerships come not just from arithmetic of numbers, but also from the underpinnings of the relationship. India and ASEAN nations have relations free from contests and claims. We have a common vision for the future, built on commitment to inclusion and integration, belief in sovereign equality of all nations irrespective of size, and support for free and open pathways of commerce and engagement.

The ASEAN-India partnership will continue to grow. With the gift of demography, dynamism and demand — and with rapidly maturing economies — India and ASEAN will build a strong economic partnership. Connectivity will increase and trade will expand. In an era of cooperative and competitive federalism in India, our states are also building

productive cooperation with Southeast Asian nations. India's Northeast is on a resurgent path. Links with Southeast Asia will accelerate its progress. In turn, a connected Northeast will be a bridge to ASEAN-India ties of our dreams. As Prime Minister, I have attended four annual ASEAN-India Summits and East Asia Summit. These have reinforced my conviction in ASEAN unity, centrality and leadership in shaping the region in this vision.

This is a year of milestones. India turned 70 last year. ASEAN reached the golden milestone of 50 years. We can each look to our future with optimism and to our partnership with confidence.

At 70, India exudes the spirit, enterprise and energy of its young population. As the fastest growing major economy in the world, India has become the new frontier of global opportunities and an anchor of stability of the global economy. With every passing day, it is easier and smoother to do business in India. I hope that ASEAN nations, as our neighbours and friends, will be an integral part of New India's transformation.

We admire ASEAN's own progress. Born when Southeast Asia was a theatre of a brutal war and a region of uncertain nations, ASEAN has united 10 countries behind a common purpose and a shared future. We have the potential to pursue higher ambitions and address the challenges of our times: from infrastructure and urbanisation to resilient agriculture and a healthy planet. We can also use the power of digital technology, innovation and connectivity to transform lives at unprecedented speed and scale.

A future of hope needs a solid bedrock of peace. This is an age of change, disruptions and shifts that comes only rarely in history. ASEAN and India have immense opportunities — indeed, enormous responsibility — to chart a steady course through the uncertainty and turbulence of our times to a stable and peaceful future for our region and the world.

Indians have always looked East to see the nurturing sunrise and the light of opportunities. Now, as before, the East, or the Indo-Pacific Region, will be indispensable to India's future and our common destiny. The ASEAN-India partnership will play a defining role in both. And, in Delhi, ASEAN and India renewed their pledge for the journey ahead.

*Courtesy - The Pioneer*

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# No, My Lord

India's Supreme Court judges warn democracy is in danger

Prashant Tewari

In a stunning move, four of the senior-most judges of India's Supreme Court have publicly slammed the functioning of the country's top court and warned that democracy will not survive without an independent judiciary.

Four senior judges of India's Supreme Court have complained publicly about the way the court is being run and cases are assigned. They accused Chief Justice Dipak Misra of ignoring their suggestions to take remedial measures.

In a press conference on 12 Jan 2018, the first of its kind to be held by sitting

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The judges' move highlights the widening rift in the upper echelons of the country's judiciary. The press conference was held at the house of Justice Chelameswar, who is lower in seniority only to the chief justice of India

Supreme Court judges, Justices Jasti Chelameswar, Ranjan Gogoi, Madan Lokur and Kurian Joseph alleged selective assignment of important cases to benches by Chief Justice Misra.

The judges' move highlights the widening rift in the upper echelons of the country's judiciary. The press conference was held at the house of Justice Chelameswar, who is lower in seniority only to the chief justice of India.

"This is an extraordinary event in the history of any nation, more particularly this nation, and an extraordinary event in the institution of judiciary," Justice Chelameswar told reporters.

"This is an extraordinary event in the



history of any nation, more particularly this nation, and an extraordinary event in the institution of judiciary,' said Justice Chelameswar

"It is with no pleasure that we are compelled to call this press conference. But sometimes administration of the Supreme Court is not in order, and many things which are less than desirable have happened in the last few months," Chelameswar said. "Democracy cannot survive without an independent judiciary," the judge added. "We tried to collectively persuade the chief justice

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**R.S. Sodhi, a retired Supreme Court justice, was quoted by The Associated Press news agency as saying that the judges' decision to express their grievances openly was appalling. He said they should have sought redress within the system.**

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of India that certain things are not right and remedial measures need to be taken, but unfortunately we failed." Misra, who took over as chief justice in August 2017, has yet to comment on the allegations. In a letter to Chief Justice Misra that has been made public, the judges said they "are not mentioning details only to avoid embarrassing the institution."

### **Mixed reactions**

Observers say it was unprecedented for Indian judges to publicly criticize the head of the country's highest court. The action drew mixed reactions, with some praising the four judges and others condemning them.

R.S. Sodhi, a retired Supreme Court justice, was quoted by The Associated Press news agency as saying that the judges' decision to express their grievances openly was appalling. He said they should have sought redress within the system.

Former solicitor general of India N Santosh Hegde said he was "devastated" by their action which has caused "irreparable" damage to the institution. "As a retired judge of the Supreme Court, I



feel devastated. "For some reason or the other, their cause is justified, (but) relief they are seeking is wrong...going to the media? No. Judiciary was always considered as a family. Family disputes are never taken to the streets," Hegde told the Press Trust of India news agency.

But Supreme Court advocate Indira Jaising described the press conference as "historic."

"I think we, the people of India, have a right to know what is going on within the judiciary and I welcome this," she said.

Former Law Minister Hansraj Bharadwaj said the allegations made by the

judges are a loss of prestige for the entire institution. "If you lose public's trust, what remains?" Bharadwaj told the Indian news agency, ANI. "Judiciary must remain the pillar of democracy. It is the responsibility of the law minister to see how it functions."

The opposition Congress party also chimed in, tweeting: "We are very concerned to hear four judges of the Supreme Court expressed concerns about the functioning of the Supreme Court."

Senior politician and Bharatiya Janata Party leader Yashwant Sinha said on Twitter that he stood firmly with the four judges. "Seen some of the



comments. Stand firmly with the four judges. Instead of criticising them, let us concentrate on the issues raised by them. If the highest court is compromised then democracy is in peril," he wrote.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, especially the law ministry, was guarded in its reaction, viewing it as "an internal matter of the judiciary."

### **Influential and slow**

India's Supreme Court is the highest judicial forum and the final court of appeals in the country. It currently

comprises the chief justice and 24 other senior judges, with six vacancies.

The institution wields enormous influence in the South Asian nation and has in the past revoked laws passed by the parliament that it regarded as infringing upon citizens' rights.

The four senior justices, along with the CJI, are part of the Supreme Court collegium that selects judges to the apex court and high courts.

The controversy comes at a time when Indian judiciary is already struggling with its reputation for being a snail-paced justice delivery system, with a huge backlog of pending cases.

It's estimated that about 30 million cases are pending in various courts across the country.

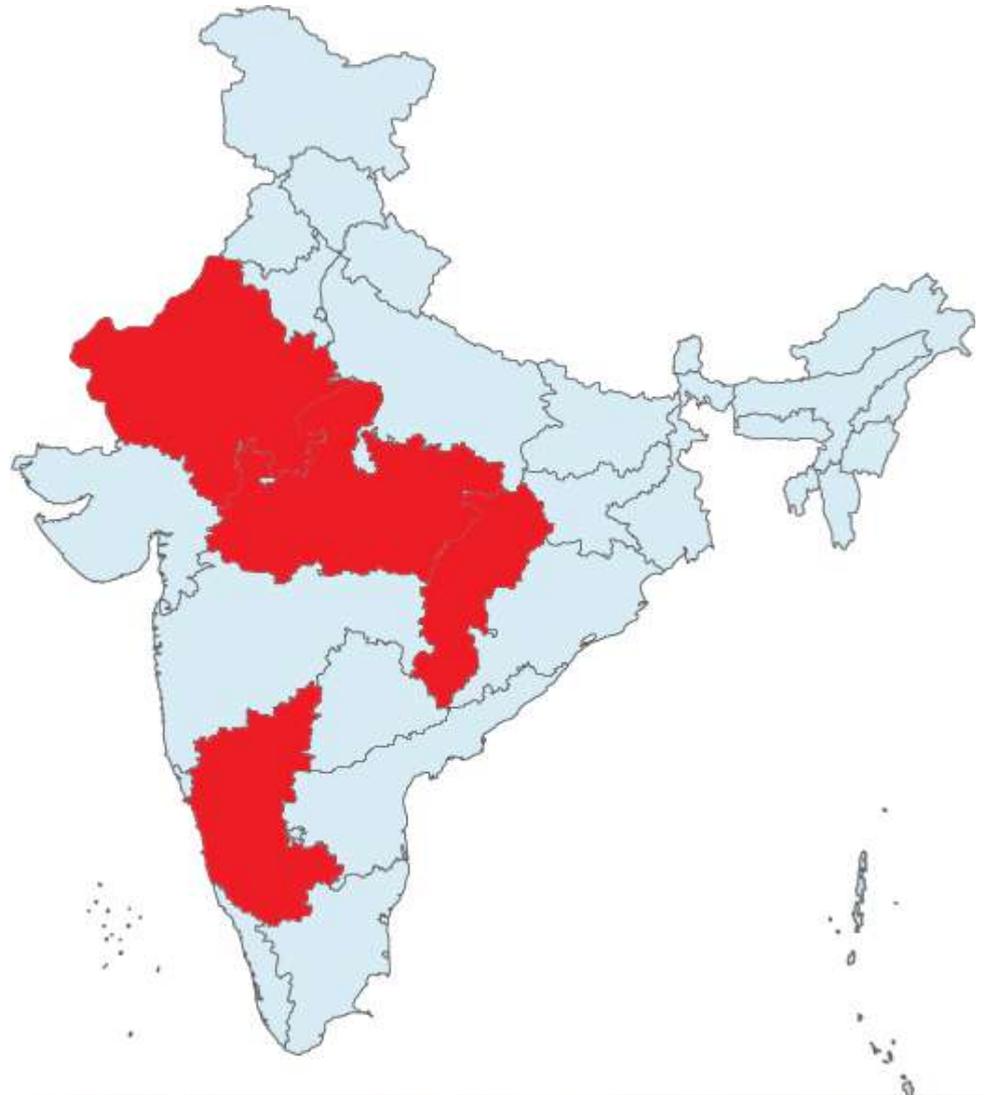
The government and judiciary in India needs to focus on delivering justice to its citizen and restore credibility of the institution that is vital for the survival of democracy in India. The individual judge have limited value in the entire eco system so the present battle of top judges must be ignored and the focus must shift back to address the larger institutional issues at the earliest.

*(Writer is Editor-in-Chief, Opinion Express)*

# UP AGAINST ODDS

BJP has to fight anti-incumbency in 3 out of 4 big states

**B**JP growing organization muscle and RSS formidable back up will be tested in the four major states going to polls in 2018. The outcome of the four states going to polls is likely to effect the General Election of 2019. BJP has comprehensively routed the opposition challenge in states like Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Manipur, Gujarat and Himachal, BJP has begun oiling its gears for an action packed 2018, where they will not only be looking forward to make a sweep in their new found grounds of North East, but also aim to save their fortresses from being overrun by a resurgent opposition. The elections are vital for the Congress party under its new president Rahul Gandhi to stake claim on the national politics. Post Gujarat, the party has gained lost confidence though the organization structure remains suspect to fight the might of BJP / RSS organization.



**2018 is when BJP will contest in the following states:-**

- 1.) Karnataka
- 2.) Madhya Pradesh
- 3.) Rajasthan
- 4.) Chhattisgarh
- 5.) Tripura
- 6.) Meghalaya
- 7.) Mizoram

The main focus of attention will be on the first four states mentioned, i.e. Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. While the Karnataka is ruled by Congress, the other three are the prime bastions of BJP. One would be concerned as to what chances BJP possesses in the four states, and what effect it will have on the upcoming 2019 elections. Here is how BJP can fare in the following four states:-





## 1.) Karnataka:-

This state is nothing less than a golden opportunity for BJP to reclaim its lost ground and restore its pride in the run up to 2019 elections. Karnataka is being tortured on a daily basis by the incumbent Chief Minister Siddharamaiah, who is doing precisely what kicked Akhilesh Yadav out of power in the 2017 elections for the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly. The state has been witnessing excessive minority appeasement and an apparent break down of law and order machinery, under incumbent Chief Minister Siddharamaiah.

Following are some key issues that have given the incumbent Karnataka government a really bad name in current Indian politics : Rampant corruption prevalent in both political and bureaucratic circles and introducing AHINDA policy, on the lines of the notorious KHAM policy of Gujarat , that aims to destroy the unity of the majority sect, i.e. Hindus, by caste based division and reservations among the lower castes, the minority sects etc.

1.) Rampant smuggling of forest products, especially the valuable red sandalwood.

2.) Gagging of journalists, prime example being Ravi Belagere, Anil Raju and Shiv Aroor.

3.) Making the lives of Karnataka farmers a living hell by refusing to waiver off loans, and giving a meager compensation of Rs1 for the crops destroyed in the drought that North Karnataka farmers have been suffering from for

the past 3 years

4.) Introducing the arbitrary KPME Act for doctors, that is nothing less than a modern equivalent of Rowlatt Act for doctors in Karnataka

5.) Crime Against Women

6.) Turning a blind eye to issue like cleanliness, broken roads, and other such civic duties.

7.) Excessive focus on Minorities, a complete neglect of Hindus in the state. This issue can be articulated with the major community of the state to regain power.

Does BJP have a chance this time? Yes, BJP does have a very bright chance of making it big in the 2018 Karnataka elections, provided it keeps its books straight. The presumptive CM candidate Yadyurappa must unite the crucial lyngayat community for BJP to secure firm victory.

First of all, they need to project a strong, localized leadership. The other thing they need to keep in mind is that they should not for once; give up on their trump card, i.e. aggressive nationalism, which is the need of the hour, especially for a state like Karnataka.

This time, BJP has two big aces up its sleeve , Congress stalwart S.M. Krishna who joined BJP sometime back could be the Himanta Biswa Sarma of Karnataka given the significant clout he has in his own community, i.e. Vokkaliga community. Also , the return of firebrand B.S. Yedyurappa into the BJP fold, who was exonerated of most of the false charges leveled against him in the infamous mining scam of 2012 -13 can give an aggressive face to BJP's campaign . In all BJP looks very well poised to cross the magical figure of 130 seats.



## 2.) Madhya Pradesh:-

Another state where BJP can hit the jackpot on a grand note is the state of Madhya Pradesh. Though the state is likely to face the winds of anti incumbency, an aggressive campaign on the lines of UP, and the ever so reliable face of State CM Shivraj Singh Chauhan, can work wonders for BJP, who has successfully brought the state out of the notorious BIMARU group in his 15 years of brilliant governance.

While it's true that MP was in the news for the wrong reasons, courtesy the sinister accusations of Vyapam scam [which was ironically initiated in 2002, when Digvijay Singh was in power], and the carefully crafted Farmer Protests. But the Chouhan Government was successful in nipping the conspiracies in the bud.

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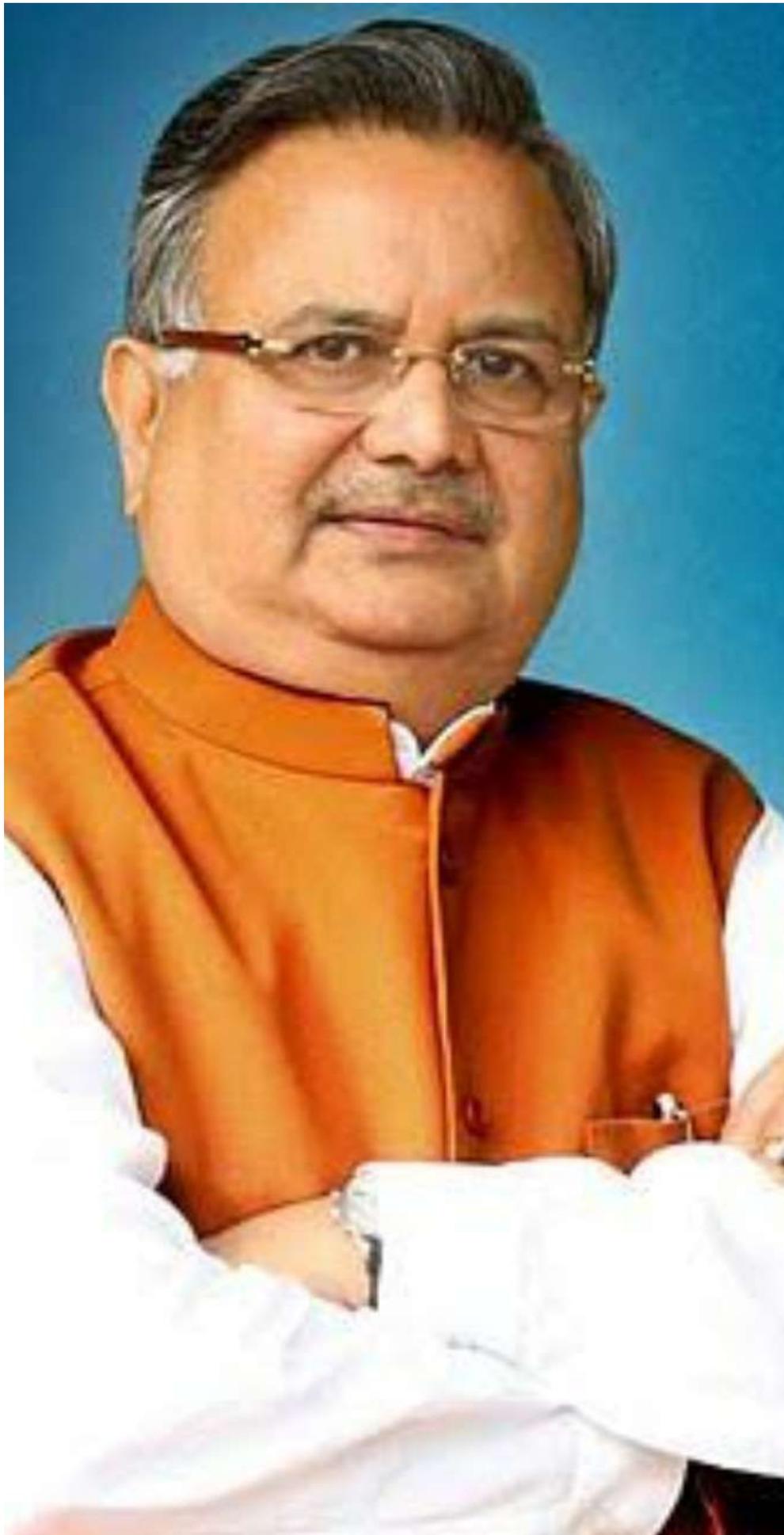
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BJP should effectively capitalize on the recent slew of reforms in the state, be it the introduction of Purohityam Scheme, which makes sure that caste is no bar for becoming a religious Hindu priest, or the introduction of the Sukanya scheme for the downtrodden girls, or capital punishment for offenders found guilty of sexually assaulting minor girls. Even the famous 2016 encounter, where the brave policemen of Bhopal ATS successfully gunned down the 8 dreaded SIMI terrorists who escaped the Bhopal Central Jail, can also be milked upon. An aggressive campaign, with a focus on such positive incidents, can surely give BJP more than the 165 seats that they received in the previous election.

Like Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh can also give a shot in the arm to BJP in their road to 2019 elections, provided they don't let caste crony like Hardik Patel or Jignesh Mevani to rise in their state. Shivraj Singh above all,





needs to maintain the aura of a charismatic leader. The central leadership of the BJP must strengthen Shivraj Singh instead of getting threatened by the cloud he will enjoy post his fourth successive victory.

### **3.) Chattisgarh:-**

This is one state, which is tough, but not impossible. It will be tough for Raman Singh to fight the anti incumbency. Raman Singh was recently at the center of a media hit job when he was attacked for the arrest of Journalist Vinod Verma in connection with his possession of CDs, which had clips of some important BJP leaders in compromising position. However the fact that Verma was a man of questionable credentials, and is now accused of extortion doused the fires. But such hit-jobs will only increase in the run-up to the election.

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The transfer of officers such as CRPF commandant IGP S.R.P. Kalluri from the Bastar region, on the behest of false charges levied by Maoist sympathizers like Bela Bhatia dented Raman Singh's credentials.

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The transfer of officers such as CRPF commandant IGP S.R.P. Kalluri from the Bastar region, on the behest of false charges levied by Maoist sympathizers like Bela Bhatia dented Raman Singh's credentials. Kalluri was instrumental crushing the Maoist challenge. it would be quite difficult for Raman Singh to gain the required 46 seats to form a government without any coalition.

However, all is not lost. If Raman Singh can set forward the procedure for the re introduction of 'Salwa Judum' and give more teeth to the CRPF and BSF units stationed in Chattisgarh against Maoists, apart from cracking down on the liberal Maoist nexus, nothing is impossible. Above all, a hard crackdown on the fledgling casteism policy, as adopted by ex CM Ajit Jogi, who has recently walked out of Congress a couple of months ago, can work wonders for BJP, who may win a handsome majority, keeping the above in mind.



#### 4.) Rajasthan:-

This is one bastion where it will be difficult for BJP to gain its ground back, because of dictatorial approach of the CM of Rajasthan, Vasundhara Raje, who is now turning out to be the Achilles heel for BJP. Her recent slew of decisions, have only alienated the support in her favor instead of strengthening her fortress for the upcoming 2018 elections.

While it's a universal truth that governments change in Rajasthan every 5 years on a consistent basis since 1993, the current trends are heavily against BJP, thanks to the controversial decisions.

- 1.) Failing in preventing hate crimes against the Hindu community
- 2.) No control over the erratic bureaucracy
- 3.) Introduction of Criminal Law

### Turning a blind eye to the rampant cow smuggling for cattle slaughter, and instead cracking down on the 'Gau Rakshaks'

Amendment Bill 2017 in the legislative assembly, which gave dictatorial powers to the incumbent government and allegedly gave politicians immunity from arrest in criminal cases.

4.) Turning a blind eye to the rampant cow smuggling for cattle slaughter, and instead cracking down on the 'Gau Rakshaks'

5.) Failure in managing to control the anarchy caused after the release of

the trailer of Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone starrer 'Padmavati'

6.) Anandpal Encounter and despair of Rajput Vote bank

7.) The state has failed to show any significant increase in basic parameters like education, health, sanitation etc.

If this continues to be the case, I doubt if BJP, that steamrolled Congress in Rajasthan by winning 163 out of 200 assembly seats contested in the 2013 elections, can even cross the majority mark of 101.

To sum it up, BJP is all set for a tight, action packed 2018. A few bold decisions, along with aggressive campaigning on the lines of Assam and UP Campaigns can seal victories in the mentioned states. If BJP manages to win all four, their target for more than 300 Lok Sabha seats in 2019 elections will start looking more practical.

# WHY DOES DAVOS MATTER?

The annual jamboree of best economic brains of the world gets bigger and bigger

David Child

The four-day 2018 World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting is dominated by India story. International politicians and business leaders will ascend to the Swiss Alps for the summit, which is focused on “Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World”, according to the WEF’s website.

Discussions range from “Saving economic globalisation from itself” to “Finding a new equilibrium in the Middle East”. But critics have questioned the WEF’s vision for globalisation, and say the talks are unlikely to help redistribute the world’s wealth.

## Is this year’s meeting significant?

The WEF says this year’s summit is important because of the debates

surrounding globalisation. But critics expect more of the same, claiming the WEF is a “talking shop” incapable of delivering meaningful change. “The main critique is that it is a manifest failure of imagination,” Max Lawson, Oxfam International’s head of inequality policy.

WEF attendees “have had many years now of handwringing about the growing gap between rich and poor, and very little to show for it ... This is clearly because business as usual is good business for those at the top.

“Ultimately it is public mobilisation and public anger that will lead to progressive change.” A report by Oxfam published in advance of the Davos summit revealed that half of the world’s population received no share of all wealth created globally in 2017.

Instead, billionaires increased their wealth by \$762bn last year, enough

to end “global extreme poverty seven times over”, the UK-based charity’s annual inequality report said. “The model of globalisation pursued for the last 40 years had clearly had one set of major winners, the very richest in society,” Lawson said, as he warned the current vision on globalisation will create further political, social and economic instability. “There has to be a complete change in the economic model.”

## What is WEF?

WEF is a Geneva-based non-profit foundation committed to “improving the state of the world”, according to the organisation’s website. It aims to shape global, regional and industrial agendas by bringing people together through dialogue.

Established in 1971 by the German economist Klaus Schwab, the WEF was





originally known as the European Management Forum, until a name change 16 years later, in 1987.

### What happens in Davos?

The WEF's flagship event sees world leaders and business chiefs among some 2,500 attendees, from more than 100 different countries.

They hear cases for international collaboration as a means of solving global challenges. Mirek Dusek, a member of WEF's executive committee informed that more than 65 heads of state will flock to the "historic annual meeting. "But what is even more important is that these political leaders are going to engage ... [with] the issues that really matter to the global agenda," he said. Those issues include the future of mobility, production, the environment and international peace, Dusek said.

### Who's attending?

US President Donald Trump, Indian leader Narendra Modi, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and German Chancellor Angela Merkel are expected to attend. Trump's attendance, which comes amid an ongoing US government shutdown, would mark the first visit to the annual summit by a sitting US president since Bill Clinton in

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But it is Modi who will have the first word, with the Indian prime minister due to give the summit's opening address on Tuesday morning. He is expected to urge international businesses to invest in India, which is on track to becoming the world's fifth-largest economy this year

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2000. Trump's "America First" agenda runs contrary to the WEF's pro-globalisation approach.

"What is important is that the biggest economy in the world is represented here, and for people to understand the economic, and overall international priorities, of the current [US] administration," said the WEF's Dusek.

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dress on Tuesday morning. He is expected to urge international businesses to invest in India, which is on track to becoming the world's fifth-largest economy this year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Christine Lagarde, the managing director of the IMF, are also expected to attend. More than 1,900 individuals representing private sector companies and 900 members of non-governmental organisations are also expected to participate.

Critics use the phrases "Davos Man" and "Davos Woman" as shorthand for attendees, alleging the meeting is little more than an exclusive gathering of global elites.

"It probably sends out the wrong message, namely that globalisation benefits a jet-setting elite, when in reality everyone benefits when economies open up to trade," Sam Dumitriu, head of research at the UK-based Adam Smith Institute, told Al Jazeera.

"Politicians need to stand up for trade, migration and markets, [and] if Davos nudges them to speak out, then it's worthwhile. But, little of note appears to be accomplished at the summit."

**(COURTESY: AL JAZEERA NEWS)**

# Indian PM Modi sweeps Davos, rolls out red carpet for global investors

Kapil Dudakia

Confident India and its leader deliver the opening speech at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Indian leader Narendra Modi has warned that globalisation is under threat. Modi told delegates at the Swiss resort on Tuesday that “forces of protectionism are raising their heads” against international trade and commerce. “Bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations have come to a kind of standstill,” he said.

Modi, the first Indian prime minister to visit a WEF summit in more than two decades, called for reform of international institutions, continued com-

Modi, the first Indian prime minister to visit a WEF summit in more than two decades, called for reform of international institutions, continued commitment to a rules-based world order and greater focus on inclusivity in the global economy during his address.

mitment to a rules-based world order and greater focus on inclusivity in the global economy during his address.

The focus of this year’s edition of the annual Davos meeting is on creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World,

according to the Geneva-based foundation’s website. Modi praised India, home to some 1.2 billion people, for its commitment to democracy and diversity. “For a society with diverse religions, cultures, languages, attires and cuisines,

Modi warned Davos delegates about the rising tide of protectionism, pledges to remove it in India





democracy is not just a political system but a way of living,” he said, adding that inclusion is the “main principle” of his government.

Kenneth Roth, executive director of international rights group Human Rights Watch, has accused Modi of failing to address the “growing populist intolerance and exclusion” occurring in a number of countries worldwide, including India. Critics of the Davos summits suggest the annual WEF meeting serves as little more than a “talking shop” for the global elite.

Meanwhile Oxfam International in a report criticizes Indian government policy, suggesting that 1% of rich in India controls 73% of country’s wealth. WEF attendees “have had many years now of handwringing about the growing gap between rich and poor, and very little to show for it ... This is clearly because business as usual is good busi-

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ness for those at the top”, A report by Oxfam, published in advance of the Davos summit, has revealed that half of the world’s population received no share of all wealth created globally in 2017.

Instead, billionaires increased their wealth by \$762bn last year, enough to end “global extreme poverty seven

times over”, the UK-based charity’s annual inequality report said. Off course Modi government has a task in hand to check this wealth concentration for select few and its distribution amongst over billion people equally.

*(UK Bureau Chief  
from Davos)*

# Sibal's court blunder or masterstroke for Congress in GE 2019

Kapil Sibal's plea before SC to defer Ayodhya hearing a blunder or masterstroke for Congress in GE 2019?

Prakhar P Misra

**N**ewly anointed Congress President Rahul Gandhi has the formidable task of rejuvenating the grand old party from its rather run-down present state into a lean, mean fighting machine in next few months. As it is the task is difficult but his political quirks make it even more daunting. For one, he still functions in the political paradigms of the 1980s. His politics remains tied to his grandmother's apron strings. He still swears by 80s-style failed socialist policies, reviles big businesses and indulges in homilies to pose as messiah of the masses. Rahul's 'killer blueprint' of resisting BJP in-

He still swears by 80s-style failed socialist policies, reviles big businesses and indulges in homilies to pose as messiah of the masses. Rahul's 'killer blueprint' of resisting BJP involves doing an extensive temple run in Gujarat and blocking the temple run in Ayodhya – a contradiction that the BJP has been quick to latch on.

volves doing an extensive temple run in Gujarat and blocking the temple run in Ayodhya – a contradiction that the BJP has been quick to latch on. The impos-

sibility of this position may not have occurred to the dynast but in any case a Congress leader shall always be around, ready to be martyred in the larger cause





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Once Gujarat is over, however, Congress's need for a soft-Hindutva positioning is exhausted, and it even becomes counter-productive ahead of the Ayodhya verdict where its ambiguity contrasts unfavourably with BJP's clarity on Ram Temple. Hence Sibal's submission in court that Ram Temple verdict should be postponed till after 2019 general elections. Two motivations prompted this act.

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of saving a Gandhi if matters get out of control. Sibal appears to be the 'chosen one' this time. Let us examine whether this is a superficial view or there is more to it than meets the eye. Could it be that the seasoned legal eagle, known both for the sharpness of his intellect and of his tongue, was prepared to lose the immediate battle in order to prepare well for the decisive war ahead – GE 2019?

Congress' biggest problem is that of bankruptcy of ideas: A failure to find an ideological space or a political positioning. Consequently, it tries to occupy all sorts of spaces—liberal, conservative, subaltern, casteist, classist, rural, prominority or majoritarian—and often

the inherent tension between these spaces makes its position untenable. It is evident that Rahul felt the need to delve in soft-Hindutva ahead of Gujarat elections and went out of his way to do a round of temples and pose as a Brahmin poster boy.

Once Gujarat is over, however, Congress's need for a soft-Hindutva positioning is exhausted, and it even becomes counter-productive ahead of the Ayodhya verdict where its ambiguity contrasts unfavourably with BJP's clarity on Ram Temple. Hence Sibal's submission in court that Ram Temple verdict should be postponed till after 2019 general elections. Two motiva-

tions prompted this act. First, deny Narendra Modi ahead of GE 2019 the fruits of Hindu vote bank consolidation that will inevitably result from any Supreme Court decision either way. If it is in favour of the temple the Hindu masses, irrespective of caste distinctions, will shower him with their votes out of gratitude; if not, then their frustration and angst will make them rally even more unitedly behind him. Second, buy time to decide on Congress's own political position depending on the unfolding scenario.

Sibal has since issued statements that are easily refuted and are at odds with his stature as a senior, seasoned lawyer. He claimed that he never represented the Sunni Waqf Board in court. He told ANI: "The Prime Minister did not check the fact that actually I never represented the Sunni Waqf Board in the Supreme Court. And yet he thanked Sunni Waqf Board for a statement on the basis that I represented them. I request the prime minister to be a little more careful." Documents widely available in public domain clearly show that he was, in fact, representing the Sunni Waqf Board in Supreme Court. Other documents also surfaced that demolished Sibal's defence that he wasn't

appearing for the Sunni Waqf Board. The events took a curious turn a day after when Zafaryab Jilani, convenor of the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC), threw his weight behind Sibal and claimed: “Whatever Sibal has said has been stated with prior consultation with all advocates including leaders of the Muslim Personal Law Board. Sibal had discussed this. With full confidence, we can say that we completely endorse what Sibal said.”

The ANI report also quoted Haji Mehboob, who now seemed to be backtracking from his earlier statement. “If Jilani saab is saying that what Kapil Sibal said yesterday was right, then I agree with him. I don’t want to say anything else.” Finally on Thursday, the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Board chairman Zulfar Ahmed Farooqi claimed Sibal wasn’t representing them. He was “representing one of the private parties involved in the suit.”

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## In short, the compulsions of Gujarat assembly elections 2017 made Rahul Gandhi go on around of the temples; similarly, the compulsions of Lok Sabha GE 2019 made Sibal seek postponement of the case hearings.

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It is not difficult to imagine what may have conspired behind the scenes within a span of 24 damaging hours for the Congress. The protestations and denials issued since are designed to absolve Sibal of all responsibility for his statement, leading one to wonder whom exactly was the senior lawyer representing while making that submission.

However, the political script in the court drama can tremendously boost Congress chance to take on omnipotent BJP led by Narendra Modi, RSS and Mumbai club. On ground zero, Congress party led by newly elected Rahul Gandhi has limited chance to reclaim the lost territory. The political map is dominated by saffron and regional parties today because Congress’s biggest problem is that of bankruptcy of ideas: a failure to find an ideological space



or a political positioning. It is evident that Rahul felt the need to delve in soft-Hindutva ahead of Gujarat elections and went out of his way to do a round of temples and pose as a Brahmin poster boy. This is after all is merely the cloning of BJP’s winning formula of Hindutva, albeit in a much milder form. But even then it has the ingredients of what it takes to alienate the Muslim vote bank that has traditionally been the party’s mainstay. It is precisely to pre-empt this dangerous circumstance that Sibal’s request to defer the case beyond GE 2019 was designed. In short, the compulsions of Gujarat assembly elections 2017 made Rahul Gandhi go on around of the temples; similarly, the compulsions of Lok Sabha GE 2019 made Sibal seek postponement of the case hearings. Congress can ill afford to lose its Muslim supporters which would have been inevitable in the event of a court verdict on the Ayodhya case.

Now the master stroke of Sibal has the potential to revive the party from being on the ventilator to the racing track by strategically attracting

pan India 15% minority vote that can be the launching pad for RaGa with his newly acquired soft hindutva persona. By a single action, the political landscape of the country can be altered but it needs better political articulation. RaGa Congress can be revived only when the party can snatch minority votes from the regional outfits namely SP, BSP, RJD, RLD, NCP, YSR Congress, TMC etc and it should be clubbed with soft hindutva narrative to mount a serious challenge for Modi led BJP. The optimum polarization is possible by aggressive approach, the same is brilliantly provided by Kapil Sibal on a platter to the Congress party. The roadmap to GE 2019 is scripted with brilliance and the pursuit of success will test the political acumen of the Congress president. Soft Hindutva with Sibal’s taking up cudgels for the Muslim minority in the Ayodhya case can turn out to be the winning bet for the ailing Congress party in GE 2019.

☞(Writer’s political editor)☞

# AMBASSADORS ON THE MOVE

You are seeing a transformed India, PM tells PIO  
Parliamentarians, Says Indian Diaspora is the  
ambassador of the country



Prime Minister Narendra Modi  
addressed the first PIO Parliamentarian  
Conference in New Delhi.

**A**ppreciating the role of PIO community in promoting brand India globally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said India is seeing a substantial transformation in the last three-four years and that the focus on the country has grown in an unprecedented manner while the economy has undergone a paradigm shift.

“You must have felt a major transformation in India in the last three-four years. The outlook towards India has changed. The focus on us has increased, perception of the world towards us is

also changing. India has come far ahead of that era when the thinking was nothing will change in India,” Modi said while addressing the first PIO-Parliamentarian Conference here.

### ‘Partners in development’

While inaugurating the Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra here in the Capital, Modi said NRIs are partners for India’s development. He said that NRIs have an important position in the Action Agenda till 2020, drafted by the NITI Aayog. As many as 124 parliamentarians and 17 Mayors of Indian origin attended the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

The Prime Minister said he felt as

if a Mini World Parliament of Indian origin was gathered in Delhi. He noted that persons of Indian origin are today Prime Ministers of Mauritius, Portugal and Ireland.

He added that persons of Indian origin have also been heads of state and heads of government in many other countries. He said he considers the Indian diaspora as India’s permanent Ambassadors spreading the country’s cultural ethos and heritage wherever they settle.

“Whenever I’m on an official tour of a foreign country, I try to meet with the Indians residing there because I believe the Indian diaspora is the permanent

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He also said his government has taken some far-reaching policy reforms for the growth of Indian the economy due to which the country is witnessing “irreversible change” in the socio-economic set up of the country.

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ambassador for bilateral relations with countries all over the world,” he added.

He also said his government has taken some far-reaching policy reforms for the growth of Indian the economy due to which the country is witnessing “irreversible change” in the socio-economic set up of the country.

He said it is due to these reforms that the foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into the country reached \$60 billion in 2016-17 and India’s ranking in the ‘Ease of Doing Business’ index has improved to 42.

On the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rollout, Modi said this has enabled the government to eliminate several other taxes. The Prime Minister also lauded the fact that India is the world’s largest recipient of remittances. “Today, institutions like the World Bank, IMF and Moody’s are looking at India in a very positive way,” he added.

Indian Prime Minister extended appeal to PIO community in building brand India globally to achieve the target of making India a super power in the near future.



# WEALTH OF A NATION

India 6th wealthiest nation with total wealth of \$8,235 bn

Opinion Express News Bureau

**L**OVE ME OR HATE ME BUT ALWAYS KEEP MY NAME ON BOARD: the miraculous story of a nation of over billion people is gradually shaping up in a ferry tale saga. Now India has been ranked sixth in the list of wealthiest countries with total wealth of \$8,235 billion, while the United States topped the chart, says a report.

According to a report by New World Wealth, the United States is the

According to a report by New World Wealth, the United States is the wealthiest country in the world as the total wealth held in 2017 amounted to \$64,584 billion, followed by China at the second place with \$24,803 billion and Japan with \$19,523 billion at third.

wealthiest country in the world as the total wealth held in 2017 amounted to \$64,584 billion, followed by China at

the second place with \$24,803 billion and Japan with \$19,523 billion at third. Total wealth, refers to the private





wealth held by all the individuals living in each country/city. It includes all their assets (property, cash, equities, business interests) less any liabilities. The report, however, excludes government funds from its figures.

Others in the list include United Kingdom (4th, \$9,918 billion), Germany (5th, \$9,661 billion), France (7th, \$6,649 billion), Canada (8th, \$6,394 billion), Australia (9th, \$6,143 billion) and Italy (10th, \$4,277 billion).

The report further noted that India was the best performing wealth market globally in 2017 as its total wealth swelled from \$6,584 billion in 2016 to \$8,230 billion in 2017, registering a 25 per cent growth.

Meanwhile, during the period under consideration China's wealth saw an increase of 22 per cent and global wealth rose by 12 per cent (from \$192 trillion at the end of 2016 to \$215 trillion at the end of 2017).

Over the past decade (2007-2017) India's total wealth increased from \$3,168 billion in 2007 to \$8,235 billion in 2017, a jump of 160 per cent.

The report further noted that India, is home to 3,30,440 HNWLs (individuals with \$1 million or more in net as-

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**The report further noted that India, is home to 3,30,440 HNWLs (individuals with \$1 million or more in net assets). Globally, India was ranked 9th in this aspect while US topped the list with 50,47,450 HNWLs (high-net-worth individuals).**

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sets). Globally, India was ranked 9th in this aspect while US topped the list with 50,47,450 HNWLs (high-net-worth individuals).

India is also home to 20,732 multi millionaires, 7th largest in the world. And in terms of resident billionaires, India with 119 such individuals was named among the top three countries globally, after the US and China. A bil-

lionaire is defined as an individuals with \$1 billion or more in net assets.

"In general, it was a good year for all W10 (wealthiest 10) markets, thanks to strong global stock market gains – the MSCI world index was up 23 per cent and the Dow Jones (DJIA) was up 26 per cent during the year (in USD terms)," the report said, adding "wealth held in China, India, USA, Japan and Australia all grew strongly over the past year"

However the challenge for growing India is enormous. The distribution of ever growing wealth remains the principle hurdle in the comprehensive growth of native Indian population. We have over 20% population living below the poverty line and the government of the day have the challenge to provide level playing field for all Indians to share the growing wealth. The top 1% of population holds 73% of the national wealth and the remaining 99% holds the remaining 27%, the phenomenal gap needs to be bridged soon in order to create an orderly civilized society. Fortunately, government of the day is aware of the disparity and there is a continuous attempt to address this vital issue of income disparity.

# Modi's three triumphant years: And more to come

There was a time, when Modi Government came into power by winning 2014 Lok Sabha elections with massive mandate and a strong clear message, "We are not here for any positions but burdened by great responsibility". Be it about strengthening the foreign policies, defense policy or the launch of welfare schemes for low income group in the country, team Modi has worked really hard to bring in new hopes and to mark their presence in the history. Modi led government has clocked over three years at the wheel; here are the five most important things that Modi Government has accomplished since coming to power.

**Strengthened economy** - The much anticipated foreign tours by the

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The much anticipated foreign tours by the PM actually brought a lot of investment with Japan investing in first bullet train of the country. While being the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Modi had proven himself to be a great supporter of economic reforms in the country

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PM actually brought a lot of investment in India and India is the most favored FDI destination of the global capital today, the most prominent investment is first bullet train of the country with Japanese collaboration. As Chief Minister of Gujarat, Modi had proven himself to be a great supporter of economic

reforms and he successfully proved that under his leadership the country will reach amazing heights.

**Make in India and digital India** - Make in India was announced to ensure MNCs from across the world begin their manufacturing plants in the





country that generates employment and contributes well to the economy. Make in India has gathered a lot of momentum and many countries have signed deals with different state and central governments. There are also, initiatives like Digital India which have completely changed the outlook of our country. It has paved way for millions of people to step in the mainstream economy.

**Swachh Bharat-** Prime Minister, Narendra Modi exhorted people to fulfill Mahatma Gandhi's vision of clean India. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan seeks to create clean India. It was launched to eliminate open defecation and promote cleanliness in the entire country. However, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in the last two and a half years has been a great success: metro & tier II cities have started to realize the importance of cleanliness.

**The mission contains two sub-missions:** Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Gramin or Rural) and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Urban) both of these operate with different ministries and various NGOs working towards the ideas of

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making India a better place to live.

**GST-** it is an indirect tax levied in India on the sale of goods and services. After implementation of the biggest tax revolution since independence, a recent report on rate of taxes on goods and services showed that majority of items have

become cheaper after GST and this has infused trust in the government to make India a better country. Talking about the long term benefits, GST is expected to lower rate of taxes but also minimum tax slabs; the impact of GST on macro-economics has turned out to be positive in the medium term. However with the implementation of GST, inflation would be reduced as the cascading effect of taxes would be eliminated.

Tough stance on critical issues- With Modi government in power, the politics of appeasement is over. After a major initiative taken by Modi Government in the Supreme Court, Triple Talaq has become unconstitutional. Muslim women's are coming in open support of this initiative.

This is a small report on centre's performance and crucial accomplishments of the Modi government in the last three years; it has insinuated the feelings of hope among people of India. This explains why Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains India's most popular political leader.

**By Laraib Fatima Warsi:  
Writer is a freelance journalist.**

# 'I don't watch as many Bollywood movies as I should'

Not even 18, she is all set to take fashion world by storm

Nithya Ramesh

**M**aya Elliott is the face of generation, a supermodel, and student by profession, she stands 5'11 inches tall and expands her influence in the fashion world, bringing together the sharpest female brains in the Fashion world. Born and brought up in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

She has a great camera presence. Her look is flexible ranging from High Fashion, to Fitness/Lifestyle. She was scouted by IMG models and life has changed for since then as she is getting ready to be America's next top model. She is represented by Ursula Wiedmann Models in Women Mainboard and they are specialised in finding amazing models and developing them to be the best models and talent they can be.

**First off tell us how you were "discovered" and how your modelling career all started?**

I was discovered by IMG models through their Instagram campaign 'WLYG' and was shortly signed after that. It all started from there.

**What kind of connection do you share with India, considering your Indian roots? Is there a bit of influence that Indian lineage gives to your food and culture choices?**

My mom was born and brought up in India until she was thirteen so since I was little I have been introduced to the food and culture of India. Some of the customs and our family dynamics come from that Indian lineage.

**Having walked for so many runway shows, you must have had lots of exposure in the high fashion, glamour side of the industry. Which would you say, has been your best show till date and why?**



I liked the first show that I did, which was at the Americas mart in Atlanta because everything was so new and exciting and the adrenaline was pumping and all the clothes that I wore were amazing.

**Was modelling something you always wanted to do, or did it just happen?**

I would always watch reality TV shows about modelling like America's next top model and it always sparked an interest and then one day I just thought that it would be a cool thing to try to do and it's been going since.

**What do you do to stay in shape?**

I try to stay in good shape by eating healthy, mainly home cooked meals and staying active by going to the gym and participating in sports.

**Are you into watching Bollywood films? If yes who is your favourite actor?**

I don't watch as many Bollywood movies as I should but I love watching the music videos from the movies. Of course everyone knows Aishwarya Rai and Priyanka Chopra but I also like Deepika (who doesn't?) and Alia Bhatt even though she's technically British.

For the gentlemen I like SRK and Salman Khan. I also like Jishu Sengupta because my mom is Bengali and she watches Bengali movies too.

**Do we also see an actress in Maya Elliott? Is acting in your bucket? If yes what kind of characters do you desire to play?**

As far as acting is concerned, it's surely on my list in the future. Atlanta has a lot of movies and television shows that are shot here and I can start out as an extra and move into other supporting roles. I have to wait till I turn 18 because of my height I can't pass for a teenager. In order to play an adult role I have to be 18. So let's see what happens over the next year. There are a lot of possibilities but I think I would do better in a comedic/light role rather than a dramatic one.

**(Writer is bureau chief,  
Fashion & Entertainment  
Desk)**



# INDIA RETAINS NO.1 RANKING IN TEST CRICKET

Despite losing the series to S Africa, India remains in the saddle

Rahul Misra

**V**irat and boys were outstanding in the third test of South Africa tour. The win means India have retained the ICC Test Championship mace and have also won an award of \$1million for being top of the rankings by the April 3 cut-off date. The victory in Johannesburg means second-placed South Africa can't go ahead of India, even if they beat Australia 4-0 in their upcoming series.

Dean Elgar and Hashim Amla shared a century second-wicket partnership in the test that took South Africa more than halfway towards their target of 241 before Amla's dismissal for 52 started a collapse in which nine wickets fell for 53 runs. Sharma and Bumrah claimed two wickets each to start the slide before Mohammed Shami ripped through the lower order, taking 5-28. The hosts were looking comfortable as Elgar and Amla compiled a partnership of 119, although it took four hours and 50.4 overs of hard work on a difficult pitch. It was only the third century partnership of the series.

But India hit back with the wickets of Amla and AB de Villiers in quick succession shortly before tea. Amla fell with the total on 124 when he clipped Sharma firmly towards midwicket and Hardik Pandya dived to his right to hold a good catch. Amla had faced 140 balls in making his second half-century of the match. De Villiers started confidently with a boundary off Sharma but was out for six when he was squared up by a lifting delivery from Jasprit Bumrah that flew off the shoulder of his bat to Ajinkya Rahane at gully.

The same two bowlers struck again immediately after tea. South African captain Faf du Plessis was bowled by a ball from Sharma that cut back and

## ICC TEST RANKINGS

1) India	121
2) South Africa	115
3) Australia	104
4) New Zealand	100
5) England	99
6) Sri Lanka	94
7) Pakistan	88
8) West Indies	72
9) Bangladesh	72
10) Zimbabwe	1

kept low and the out-of-form Quinton de Kock was trapped leg before wicket first ball by Bumrah. Vernon Philander batted brightly to make 10 before he pulled a ball from Shami onto his stumps, to be followed in quick succession by Andile Phehlukwayo, Kagiso Rabada and Morne Morkel, all without scoring. Phehlukwayo was bowled by Shami, Rabada was caught at first slip by Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Morkel was bowled by Shami.

Elgar, having batted with unflappable concentration for more than five hours, tried to play some shots and keep the strike after being joined by last man Lungi Ngidi. Elgar was left to fight alone, carrying his bat for 86 off 240 balls. He hit a six off Kumar before Ngidi was caught behind off Shami.

"This is one of our sweetest wins," skipper Virat Kohli said. "This day will be remembered for a long time for us as a team." "We already had the belief but now we have the result to back that as well.



“South Africa played better than us in the first two games so they deserved to win (the series) but we deserved to win this game. But at many moments in the first two games we put them under pressure. “We are the number one team in the world and we certainly played like that today.”

South Africa captain Faf du Plessis admitted that India had been the better team at the Wanderers but hailed the series win. “It’s fantastic to win the series against a really good team. He gave credit to India for playing some really good cricket in all three Tests.”

Experts believe that Indian team

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management including BCCI planned the tour badly. The Indian team should

have played at-least three warm up matches before pushing straight in the test cricket. It takes time to acquaint with the local conditions and surely then the talented Indian team would have defeated South African with ease in their back yard if the preparation to the test series would have been better planed. It is the sole responsibility of the BCCI to plan the itinerary better for the future overseas tour and give boys more opportunity to spend time in the overseas territory for securing better results.

**(Writer is Associate Editor, Opinion Express )**



# HIGH IMPACT GIRL RAKUL IS SOUTHERN HEARTTHROB

**R**akul Preet Singh is an Indian film actress and model who predominantly works in the Telugu film industry. She has also appeared in a few Tamil, Hindi and Kannada movies.

Currently, she is appointed as the brand ambassador for Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao programme by Telangana State Government.

She started career as a model while in college, during which she also made her acting debut in the Kannada film Gilli (2009). In 2011 she participated in the Femina Miss India pageant in which she was placed fifth and won five pageant titles including People's Choice Miss Indiatimes, Pantaloons Femina Miss Fresh Face, Femina Miss Talented, Femina Miss Beautiful Smile and Femina Miss Beautiful Eyes.

She subsequently opted to become a full-time actress, making her Telugu debut in Keratam the same year and her Tamil debut in Thadaiyara Thaakka, the following year. In 2014 she also made her Bollywood debut in Yaariyan in which her performance was better received.

She was part of the commercially successful films like Venkatadri Express (2013), Current Theega (2014), Loukyam (2014), Kick 2(2015), Bruce Lee - The Fighter (2015), Nannaku Prematho (2016), Sarrainodu (2016), Dhruva (2016),Rarandoi Veduka Chudham(2017) and Theeran Adhigaaram Ondru (2017) and established

herself as one of the leading actresses in Telugu Cinema.

**Ms Nithya Ramesh** met Southern heartthrob **Ms Rakul Preet Singh** to discuss her work and plans including the new upcoming projects.

**To be an established actor you need to be able to measure your success and build on this. How do you evaluate success within your roles?**

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because I believe success shouldn't get to your head. Of course I'm aware of what I am doing and what I want to do next and I don't evaluate the past and see if I had a successful film or a blockbuster film that how I am. I always think of what next because past is done and my way of looking at things is practical and you won't grow if you start living in the past.

**What have you learnt from previous roles and your past ex-**

There is a common saying that success means different things to different people at different levels and I am one person who doesn't really evaluate success. I'm an actor in fact that is not even something that I don't let it seek. For me it's a 9 to 5 job like anybody else, sometimes I don't finish my work so I work until night. My profession is like any other job and I don't really sit and evaluate as to what all have I achieved





**perience that would be of benefit to you in this role?**

Learning is a very subconscious process, it is not a certain project that will teach you everything as you grow each day. I have been in the industry for such long and got exposed to different level of people and had let myself grow. Your personality is carved out with that and new learning happens subconsciously when you are always open to learning, which I feel I am. I'm very adaptable and I always seem that I have never achieved anything big because the day that you realise or the day that you think you have achieved everything that's when the plane is going to crash. Personally I'm a much more mature person, I am able to handle other departments of my life as well much better because I am working and multitasking. So it's a very weird process of growth.

**What role would you love to play/ be your dream role?**

I as an actress don't want to be pigeon-holed into a particular role, but you have to start somewhere. It is important to know your strengths and be willing to take on new challenging roles. I have a clear sense of who I am and what am I good at. I prefer to act in movies like 'Saala Khadoos' or a sports Biopic like 'Mary Kom'.

**You always look so great how do you stay in shape...whats your secret?**

Fitness is something that many people think that going to the gym is a burden and its not that way to me. I own three gyms and I also like to stay fit all the time. The secret is my lifestyle and me working out.

Lifestyle because I'm in a show biz and getting paid to look a certain way. I don't believe in being disproportionate and wanting to do glamorous role as a heroine but as an actress it really doesn't matter. Recently I have lost more weight because I'm doing a film

here in Bollywood which needed me to be a certain way and down South it didn't need me to be that way so I always maintain a certain level of what is expected out of me while I'm working for Tamil or Telugu films.

Work out for me is like a stress buster. I work out when I'm happy, sad and work out even more when I'm angry [Laughs]. Working out is like a rejuvenation for each cell of my body breathing. I make sure to work out 1 hour a day and 5 times a week and If I don't get to work out for 2 days simultaneously then I get very moody and I just don't feel happy. I feel my happy hormones don't release. Last but not the least, I follow eating healthy and eating clean. I stay away from sweets and fried food.

**What drew you to make the transition from South Film Industry to Bollywood?**

For me, it is really not a transition... it's an expansion of my creativity, I mean all I want to do is to grow in life and I'm just challenging myself more than ever, so I don't really see this as a transition. I will continue doing films as long as I get good roles and love my role irrespective of regional films or Bollywood films.

**There's a lot of buzz surrounding your upcoming role in 'Aiyaary'. What drew you to the project?**

It is Neeraj Pandey's Film. Everybody wants to work with him. He is a great film-maker and his films have a certain credential. When I first got to hear about the movie, he asked me to think about it and let him know and I immediately said there was nothing to think about as I wanted to work with him and Siddharth Malhotra and 'Aiyaary' being an army film I had no second thought to work for this project. So that is how it happened and it was a wonderful journey.

**Do you feel there is a lot of pressure on you to portray a certain body image and appearance? How do you handle that?**

I don't believe in the word pressure as I think pressure is something that you build on yourself when you are competitive with others and my competition is always myself. Of course I want to do well but that doesn't mean that I will step down on other people. I don't get pressurised if I am the way I am, I give my 100% to people who want it for a certain film. Recently I read through





this line which says “few people are taking stress management techniques to handle and relieve stress” which means they are already preparing themselves for stress which they are expecting to happen to them and their mind to manage. Money, work or business needs to be managed but not stress. I believe to adapt and enjoy the process of what I am working and I am one of those people who is aware of my likes and dislikes at work, I’m lucky that I’m doing it the right way and I’m happy and proud I am doing it well so I don’t find any reason to be pressurised. Why should I add stress to something that I should enjoy, blossom and cherish.

#### **How has stardom changed you?**

Stardom has changed me as a matured person but not in the conventional way most people believe. I am the same person that I was 5 years ago and will always be the same no matter how big I grow. However stardom hasn’t changed me it has changed my circumstances.

#### **You were paired up with stars like Sidharth Malhotra, Ram Charan, Allu Arjun, Mahesh Babu. How was your experience working with them?**

It was an amazing experience working with each one of them as they are humble and supportive during shoots. Sidharth Malhotra is from Delhi, so we both keep talking about Delhi. He speaks his heart and is always fun to be with.

Allu Arjun is very hardworking and a nice person too, he is one actor who always brings a change with whatever film he is doing. Ram Charan is one of my favourite co-stars with great dedication and patience. Mahesh Babu is the most grounded and dedicated at work with no attitude or arrogance in spite of being a super star.

#### **Tell us about your experience working with director Neeraj Pandey?**

It was an outstanding experience working with Neeraj sir as he is the nicest and most keen. He knows who he is so he does everything he can to make you feel comfortable. He is a pleasure to work with and one of the best at his work and style. He makes sure to get the best out of you so he needs you to be relaxed and comfortable. He helps you find your best with many actors throughout the film and you do know you are in safe hands, which really helped me concentrate on doing my best at what I need to do while he makes you feel at ease and guides you through.

#### **What are your upcoming releases?**

I have ‘Aiyaary’ releasing this month. I’m working for another Bollywood film opposite Ajay Devgan and I play a very interesting role which is set to release in October.

Then I have got two films in Tamil, one opposite Suriya, directed by Selvaraghavan and one with Karthi which is a love story. There are talks for two films in Telugu which I will be announcing soon.

**(Bureau Chief – Entertainment & Fashion )**

# Master Craftsman

Mani Shankar is a Bollywood film director, holographic technology expert, writer and speaker.



**Nithya Ramesh**

**H**e is best known for being the architect of the World's first holographic political campaign that he designed for Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Gujarat Legislative Assembly election, 2012 and It set a Guinness World record. He has conducted election cam-

paigns for various parties including the Telangana Rashtra Samithi which eventually lead to their victory, as well as the National Congress Party.

As a Bollywood Director he made 5 films including 16 December which was one of the highest grossing films in the year of release and Tango Charlie which was screened in several International Film Festivals and is a permanent part

of the UN's films on Anti-war. Apart from these 2 films, Rudraksh (starring Sanjay Dutt, Bipasha Basu, Suniel Shetty and Isha Kopikar) was a futuristic supernatural film, Mukhbir (starring Om Puri, Suniel Shetty, Samir Dattani and Raima Sen) was the story of a young man rising above the dangerous underworld and choosing to die a patriot and Knock Out (starring Sanjay Dutt, Irrfan Kkhan and Kangana Ranaut) was also critically acclaimed and screened at the Black International festival in Berlin. Over his long career, Mani Shankar has also worked on more than 1500 Ad-Films, award winning shorts films as well as campaigns for political leaders. In 1991, his Telugu film, Manishi won him the coveted Golden Nandi award for Best Film, as well as Nandi Awards for Best Director and Best Screenplay writer.

In February 2017 Mani Shankar launched the first live Augmented Reality political campaign in the world for Shri Devendra Fadnavis, the honourable Chief Minister of Maharashtra State in India and for the first time it enabled a electoral candidate to enter people's homes and softly pitch for votes and the campaign was declared a success.

Mani Shankar helped introduce holograms to India and Indian elections. Nobody in the World has the kind of experience in handling holograms for politics like he does. A series of Life Size AR projects followed in fields ranging from Film publicity, Sports, Spirituality and Corporate launches. Spiritual Guru Swami Ganapathy Sachidananda, former Cricket Captain Kapil Dev, Actor Rana Dagubbati star of the blockbuster movie Bahubali are some of the top celebrities who have appeared as AR for various promotional and communication purposes. Celebrities like Madonna, Mariah Carey, Lady Gaga, Richard Branson, Al Gore, David Beckham, Prince Charles and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia have used 3D technology before to reach large audiences in multiple locations but Mr.Narendra Modi was the first person to adopt a new era of holographic 3D projection technology use in India where he appears from thin air and addresses the large number of audience.

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In February 2017  
Mani Shankar  
launched the first live  
Augmented Reality  
political campaign  
in the world for Shri  
Devendra Fadnavis,  
the honourable  
Chief Minister of  
Maharashtra State  
in India and for the  
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### **How do you describe 3D mapping?**

3D Projection Mapping is been around for few years. Projection mapping has been used for entertainment purpose, usually done on buildings like

making the building or collapsing it, theatrical stages and on indoor objects. This kind of stuff is standard. Of course there lot of people who have done creative work with mapping but this kind of mapping on 3D statue surfaces was never done before.

**Recently the former deputy Prime Minister L.K Advani inaugurated the 3D mapping projection of Hanuman statue in Mysuru. Could you please elaborate?**

The 3D mapping of Hanuman Chalisa on the 45-feet tall Karya Siddhi Hanuman Statue Hanuman Statue using a 4K projector at Sri Ganapathy Sachchidananda Ashram in Mysuru was one of its special kind. We had done something interesting to 3D mapping by contouring the map in 3-Dimensional manner against a gigantic statue and have made the statue come to life in so many different ways. We made people forget that there was a mapping in the first place. So the illusion of a statue coming to life was for some reason never done before. Specially when its for a religious icon like Lord Hanuman, you view the statue just not as the statue and when all the images come across then you tend to view the statue as the image of divinity itself creating a deep impact making it look very interesting. The worship played through state-of-the-art technology included Abhisheka, Deepalankara, Tulsi and Swarabhishekam for eight minutes.

There was storytelling of few instances from the Ramayana. Creative compelling illusion on a gigantic 45-feet Hanuman, we created a 5-feet Hanuman climbing up a forest, so we had to create a forest on the statue. The images and the stories together took people's imagination away and held them spell bound. The video went viral, since then there are a lot of interests across the world from various people looking at huge mapping projects which tend to change the way we look at God and worship itself. What I believe is that technology is dumb, it cannot change life but when you breathe in life into the technology it becomes creative and interesting.

**How challenging is it to project the 3D Mapping on complex structure compared to that of simple wall projection?**

It is a complicated process. To do a laser mapping of the entire statue we had to understand the statue on a pixel

by pixel basis and we used 4K resolution picture, the highest of the projection and each pixel measures to about 2mm. So we had to understand the statue by millimetre by square millimetre on every contour of it in depth x width x height in XYZ axis. Then we created a 3-Dimensional model of the statue on millimetre accurate model. Then we had to decide where to place the projector and from the projector perspective we created this on the system and map this model on to the statue. It is a situation where we map the statue on to the statue.

The 3-Dimensional map which is internal system is now super imposed on the statue and is checked for pixel accuracy. So if the nose is slightly different or the lip is slightly twisted we will see a small second layer and this second layer is corrected. It is like creating your face then make a mask for the face and put that on the face. Every little contour of

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face, the mask made has to fit perfectly. This is how we get the control over the statue. So that's the secret of how you do a mapping on the contoured statue. Having said that it is more difficult than what I explained. It is not an easy task. It took about 4 months to study and complete this project.

**Since you are the only Film Director in India who is well versed in Technology as well as Film making, do you find similar comparison in both fields and How?**

Yes, there is similarity in both Tech-

nology & Film making. Technology is a small part of the whole thing. The important thing is to understand how are you going to mesmerise the audience in both the fields. You need to understand who is your audience and what are they used to seeing. Here in technology also we have class and mass audience as we have in films. Basically Class audience always look for depth and inner meaning of the film and mass audience focuses on the Hero and how he carries the movie on his shoulder and I used the same concept in technology as well. I differentiated the content, spiritual-



ity, religion, ritualistic, understanding the meaning of lyrics from technology point of view and then be able to merge all of these.

For example there is a powerful poem of Lord Hanuman which is called the Hanuman Chalisa written by Tulsidas about 500 years back. In Hanuman Chalisa there is 'artha' (meaning) and Thulasi Das embedded a second meaning in some of the versus called the 'Rahasya Artha' (secret meaning). In the opening verse of Hanuman Chalisa, Tulsidas says "Shri Guru Charan Saroj Raj Nij mane mukure sudhar"

that means "after cleansing the mirror of my mind with the pollen dust of Holy Guru's Lotus feet" whereas the 'Rahasya Artha' is "God is an emotion built in your heart drenched in the feeling of extraordinary love, devotion, spirituality and unity of the whole world and God". For this we visualised a saffron coloured milk pouring from the head and drenching Lord Hanuman's Statue all the way till the feet with the 3D mapping technology while the Hanuman Chalisa audio is being played at the background simultaneously. We have done this kind detailing

only in few versus.

We also worked on the sound track for this project, the music was done by the Music Director Sanjay Wandrekar who has worked for many Bollywood movies like Masti, PK, 3 Idiots etc. Usually for Lord Hanuman, most of the times the song is sung by male voice. We thought why not try giving a female voice as well. The shruthi (Pitch) in the song was by female voice and the laya (Rhythm) was by the male voice. We created the mix of melody and Indian form of Rap which became so successful.



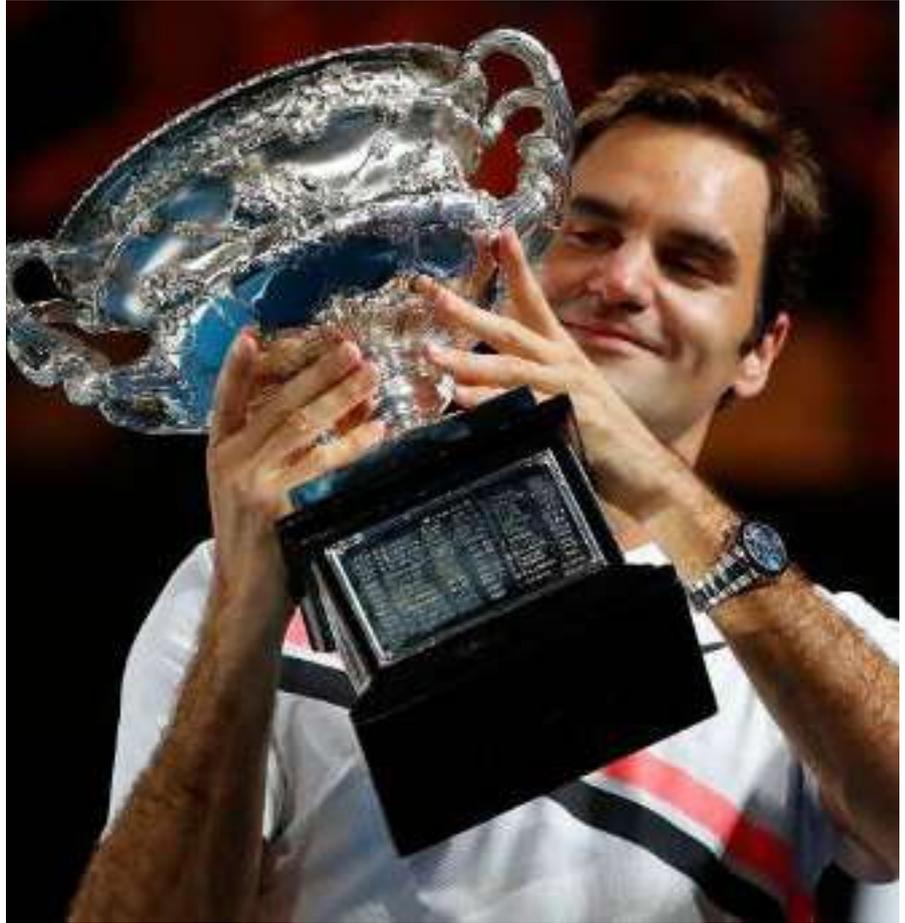
# FEDEX ON THE RUN

Roger Federer is testimony of amazing grace; outstanding player & humble human

Opinion Express News Desk

**J**ust wow. Swiss tennis legend Roger Federer in winning the Australian Open Men's Singles title after an epic five set battle with Marin Čilić, has ensured that the expanse of clear blue water between him and other greats of the game just become even wider. He has become the first man, in any era to notch up 20 Grand Slam singles titles – six Australian Opens, five US Opens and a sole French Open to go with his record 8 Wimbledon cups leaving his great rival Rafael Nadal trailing at 16 titles and surpassing by a significant margin the tally of yesteryear Greats including Pete Sampras (14) and Roy Emerson (12). But more than the titles he has accumulated has been the manner in which he has gone about collecting them ever since he burst on to the world of professional tennis at the turn of the millennium. Pushing 37 years of age now, Federer became the second oldest player to win a Grand Slam after Ken Rosewall who won the Australian Open when he was past 37, and yes, he bubbled, especially when Australian legend Rod 'Rocket' Laver turned fan-boy and insisted on taking a photograph of the Swiss master on his mobile phone after the win. Federer said later. "I was too embarrassed ...I couldn't control the emotions ... I didn't lift my head, couldn't see through my tears."

And that's the thing about Roger Federer. Despite being a very contemporary champion of the game wherein power tennis rules, he is, in the best way possible, a throwback to an earlier age of the sport. His game has always been classical – a smooth serve and volley routine but equally adept from the baseline; powerful forehand but never relying solely on bulk to propel it as many of his contemporaries do;



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a single handed backhand when the world and its uncle including sports scientists recommend the two-handed approach as steadier and safer in percentage terms, and a serve (including his brilliant second serve) that swerves and dips at pace without being a function of brute strength. Physically, he is tallish (just over six feet) without being a giant, supremely athletic without being muscle-bound and the lithe frame he has worked very hard to maintain despite the ravages of time and playing top-level professional tennis for close to two decades has resulted in court cover-

age that is a connoisseur's delight. Plus, he's well-mannered to a fault on court.

Off the court, he is one of the few champions who has never been in caught in an unseemly scandal, his marriage to fellow tennis player and long-time partner Mirka they met when they were both representing Switzerland at the Sydney Olympics is considered one of the most stable in the high stress professional tennis circuit, and they are by all accounts pretty hands on parents to their four kids. Mirka also doubles as Roger's PR and image consultant. Given her spouse's amazing grace, that's possibly the easiest job in the world of tennis.

The humility of super human being is a testimony of his greatness. Surely Roger Federer will go down in the history book as the greatest tennis player of the modern era. It is not just the tennis but the youngsters hoping to make it big in any sport round the world must adopt Federer traits to become champions. It is a simple way to achieve stardom, if the content is there.



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