

Snapshots-2008-India

- ❖ Former India captain **Kapil Dev** was decorated with the rank of **honorary Lieutenant Colonel** in the **150 Territorial Army (Infantry) battalion** of the **Punjab Regiment**. Kapil will not take part in the training of the Territorial Army but will act as a **“brand ambassador”** for the armed forces.
- ❖ The Centre has decided to extend the **Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana** to **construction workers**. This is expected to benefit 2.6 crore people. The premium would be paid from funds collected by welfare boards under the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996.
- ❖ The Union government has given its approval for a Rs. 820-crore programme for providing scholarships under the Ministry of Science and Technology's **Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research** scheme. The programme aims at attracting talented youth to science-intensive programmes by providing scholarships and mentoring through summer attachments to researchers working in scientific institutions.
- ❖ The **Delhi Union of Journalists (DUJ)** has been awarded the **Appan Menon Memorial Award** for 2008-09 for furthering the aims of its Delhi Media Centre for Research and Publications in the coming year. Into its 11th edition, the award carries a cash of Rs. 1 lakh.
- ❖ **Kerala Tourism's “Responsible Tourism (RT)” programme** seeks to involve the local community in the tourism boom. The programme focussed on economic and social uplift of local populations and environmental regeneration. Kumarakom, Kovalam, Kumily (Thekkady) and Wayanad were the locations selected for the pilot project.
- ❖ The **Nanavati-Mehta judicial commission** has concluded that the **fire aboard coach S-6** of the **Sabarmati Express** at the **Godhra railway station** on February 27, 2002, was a **“pre-planned conspiracy”**.
- ❖ The report of the **Nanavati-Mehta judicial commission**, appointed by the Gujarat government, is totally at variance with the conclusions of the **U.C. Banerjee Committee**, appointed by Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, which said the fire was **“purely accidental.”**
- ❖ A court in Delhi has rejected a lawsuit filed by Hollywood company **Warner Bros** against **Mirchi Movies**, the makers of a Bollywood film **Hari Puttar**. The makers of the blockbuster **Harry Potter** films said the title of the Indian movie was too similar.
- ❖ **Tata Power** has also entered into an agreement with the Government of **Bhutan** to develop a 114 MW hydroelectric power project on the **Dagachhu river**.
- ❖ The two-month long agitation in Jammu over the **Amarnath land issue** ended following an agreement between the government and the **Shri Amarnath Yatra Sangarsh Samiti (SAYSS)**.
- ❖ The compromise formula was facilitated by **Governor N.N. Vohra**. Land has been set aside exclusively for use by the **Sri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB)**. However, SASB would not have any proprietary/title rights on it and shall not raise any permanent structures thereon.
- ❖ **H.Y. Sharada Prasad**, media adviser to former Prime Ministers **Indira Gandhi** and **Rajiv Gandhi**, passed away at the age of 84. The Mysore-educated writer began his professional life with the **Express group** and went on to edit Planning Commission's journal **‘Yojana.’**

- ❖ The government appointed Finance Secretary **Duvvuri Subbarao** Governor of the Reserve Bank of India in place of Y.V. Reddy, who completed his term on September 5, for a three year term. Dr. Subbarao is an alumnus of IIT Kanpur and topper of the IAS (1972 batch).
- ❖ Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan has recommended to the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that **Justice Soumitra Sen** of the **Calcutta High Court** be removed for misappropriating temporarily Rs. 33 lakh deposited in the court by one of the parties to a dispute. The government decided to approach **Parliament** for **impeachment** of Justice Sen who had rejected the advice to resign or seek voluntary retirement after he had been found guilty of the misconduct in an in-house inquiry.
- ❖ Former President and India's rocket-missile technologist, **A.P.J. Abdul Kalam**, has been appointed **Chancellor** of the **Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST)**, Thiruvananthapuram. The IIST was established by the Department of Space in 2007.
- ❖ The Assam government announced the **Asom Ratna award** to ballad singer and a mass singer **Bhupen Hazarika** as a gift on behalf of the people of Assam on his 83rd birthday.
- ❖ Union Science and Technology Minister **Kapil Sibal** and his German counterpart, Annette Schavan, inaugurated the **Indo-German Science and Technology Centre** in New Delhi recently.
- ❖ The **Indo-Soviet Cultural Society (ISCUS)** has taken a new avatar as the **Indo-Russian Cultural and Friendship Society (IRCUS)** in the wake of disintegration of the Soviet Union.
- ❖ Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati has withdrawn the **Uttar Pradesh Control of Organised Crime Act (UPCOCA)**, 2007. The UPCOCA had been sent for Presidential assent after it was passed by both houses of the Legislature. It did not get assent.
- ❖ The Supreme Court has upheld certain provisions of the **Maharashtra Control of Organised Crimes Act (MCOCA)** empowering the State to intercept telephones and using them as evidence in organised crimes, including terrorist acts. Film financier **Bharat Shah**, charged under the controversial law for alleged links with the underworld, had challenged its constitutional validity.
- ❖ **R. K. Pachauri** was re-elected **Chairman** of the Nobel-prize winning **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** for a second six-year term. He was first elected Chairman in 2002 of the IPCC, established by the **World Meteorological Organisation** and the **United Nations Environment Programme** to investigate global warming and its consequences for earth. Under his leadership, the IPCC released "**Climate Change 2007**," which was awarded the Nobel Prize last year.
- ❖ **Dr. Pachauri** is also the **Director-General** of **The Energy and Resources Institute** was conferred with "**Padma Vibhushan**" for his services in the field of science and engineering in January 2008.
- ❖ The Union government has cleared the launch of a major initiative by the **Science and Technology Ministry** and the U.K. based **Wellcome Trust** to offer **fellowships** to 700 scientists working in the high-end areas of biomedical research.
- ❖ **Major General A.K. Lal** of the 3 Infantry Division became the first serving Major General to be dismissed from service by an Army Court after he was found guilty of molesting a woman officer under his command.
- ❖ Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has given approval for the establishment of an autonomous **Institute of Nano Science and Technology** at **Mohali** near Chandigarh at a cost of Rs. 142 crore.

- ❖ The Supreme Court has handed over the probe into the **Uttar Pradesh provident fund scam** to the Central Bureau of Investigation. The scam is said to involve names of some judges from the higher judiciary, including one from the apex court. It is alleged that an employee in the government treasury siphoned off crores in PF funds in collusion with district judges posted in Ghaziabad.
- ❖ **Fali Nariman** was unanimously re-elected **president** of the **Bar Association of India (BAI)** for a two-year term recently.
- ❖ After a controversial stay in West Bengal, Tata Motors has decided to shift its **Nano car project** to **Northcote Cattle Farm in Sanand**, 30 km from Ahmedabad. The search for an alternative location arose after the Tata group announced that it would exit the 900-odd acre factory complex in Singur, 40 km from Kolkata, following disruptions from protests by unwilling land losers led by Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress.
- ❖ The Gujarat government has handed over **1,100 acres** of prime land for the project. The Tata group has bought 1,100 acre of prime land at around Rs 3.5 lakh an acre. The Tata group will invest Rs 2,000 crore to manufacture the Nano and its variants including an electric car and a CNG car.
- ❖ The **Unlawful Activities (Prevention Act) Tribunal** has quashed the Central notification banning the **Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI)**. The tribunal has held that the government did not provide sufficient "grounds and facts" in the notification to keep the ban on SIMI in continuance. Simi was proscribed in 2001 and the ban extended thrice earlier.
- ❖ Prime Minister Manmohan Singh flagged off the **first ever train** in the **Kashmir Valley** at the Nowgam station in Srinagar. In the first phase, it will cover 66 km from **Anantnag** in the south to **Rajvansher** in central Budgam district. The train is part of a Rs. 11,200-crore project, which will connect Kashmir with the rest of the country.
- ❖ Gujarat government's ambitious programme to **reduce child and maternal mortality rate** seems to have caught the fancy of other states in the country. As many as 8 states in India have decided to adopt Gujarat government's '**Chiranjeevi Yojna**'.
- ❖ The Supreme Court has declared that the **seats reserved for 'other backward classes'** (OBC) in central **educational institutions** that remain unfilled can't be carried over to the next year and would have to be filled in the same year from the **general category**. The court also ruled that the relaxation of marks for the OBC category should not be more than 10 per cent of those fixed for the general category.
- ❖ The **Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)** has declared the appointment of **Maharashtra** director general of police (DGP) **AN Roy** illegal; eight months after he assumed office. The order was given on an appeal filed by director general of police (home) **Suprakash Chakravarthy**, another senior IPS officer from the state, challenging Roy's appointment. Chakravarthy claimed that Mr Roy was chosen for the job even though he was fourth in the seniority list and his appointment.
- ❖ The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the existing domestic airport at **Tirupati** to be declared as an **international airport**.
- ❖ Nanded in Maharashtra and its historic **Takhat Sachkhand Shri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib Gurudwara** hosted the commemoration of the **tercentenary** of '**Gurta Gaddi**,' or the appointment of the Adi Granth as the Guru of Sikhs recently. This gurudwara also houses Angeetha Sahib, the final resting place of 10th Sikh **Guru Gobind Singh**.

- ❖ Two of the Indian Institutes of Technology have been ranked among the top 200 universities of the world in the **Times Higher Education-QS World University Rankings**. IIT Delhi and IIT Mumbai have been ranked 154 and 174 respectively. America's **Harvard University** tops the list followed by **Yale University**, also from the U.S., while the **Universities of Cambridge and Oxford**, U.K. were placed third and fourth respectively.
- ❖ The **Union Human Resource Development Ministry** has redesigned the **National Literacy Mission** programme. '**Lok Talim**' is the new name selected by the Ministry for its redesigned programme for basic literacy and continuing education.
- ❖ Veteran playback singer **Mahendra Kapoor**, whose voice delighted countless music lovers across generations, passed away at the age of 74. The **Maharashtra government** recently selected him for the **Lata Mangeskar Award** for his **lifetime contribution** in the field of playback music. Kapoor was born in Amritsar on January 9, 1934, but moved to Mumbai. He was inspired by Mohammed Rafi and won an all-India singing competition early in his career.
- ❖ Course material of the **Indira Gandhi National Open University** will become available on mobile phones and over broadband soon. This will be facilitated by a tie-up between the university and **Time Broadband**, a company that is launched Internet Protocol television (IPTV) services in the country recently. The tie-up will see IGNOU's **Gyan Darshan channel** being broadcast over the Internet.
- ❖ The Union government has set up a high-level **ministerial committee** to **redress grievances** of the **armed forces personnel** relating to **revised pay scales**. This follows the refusal by the three services chiefs to implement the "discriminatory" recommendations of the Sixth Pay Commission. External Affairs Minister **Pranab Mukherjee** will head the three-member panel. Defence Minister **A.K. Antony** and Finance Minister **P. Chidambaram** are the other members.
- ❖ The **ban on smoking at public places** all over the country came into effect from Oct 02, 2008. Violation of the ban, imposed under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003, will attract a fine of up to Rs. 200. The ban will not cover open spaces.
- ❖ Anil Kakodkar, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), made a pitch in Vienna for the sale of India's indigenous 220 MWe **Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)** to developing countries. His offer comes in the wake of India's 30-year isolation by the Nuclear Suppliers Group coming to an end.
- ❖ Punjab CM **Parkash Singh Badal** declared the re-nomenclature of **Nawanshahar**, a district in Punjab, as **Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar**.
- ❖ **PAHAL**, the **school voucher programme**, which gives poor parents a certificate they can use to send their children to a school of their choice instead of a government school, has gained acceptance and is now being implemented in three states — Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- ❖ The government of **Rajasthan** has decided to launch an education voucher programme in the current financial year. It has two schemes — **Gyanodya** and **Shikshak Ka Apna Vidyalaya** — under which it helps NGOs and individuals build and run schools.
- ❖ The **President**, the **Vice-President** and **Governors** will get a **300 per cent pay hike** with the government clearing a proposal to enhance their emoluments. The President's emoluments have been raised to Rs 1.50 lakh

per month from Rs 50,000 at present. Similarly, the Vice-President will get Rs 1.25 lakh, compared with the present salary of Rs 40,000. The salary of governors will also go up from Rs 36,000 to Rs 1.10 lakh.

- ❖ The government has allowed **Indian editions of foreign news and current affairs magazines** stipulating a 26-per cent foreign direct investment ceiling. Magazines such as the Time and Newsweek will now be able to publish Indian editions, as long as they follow the FDI ownership cap and rope in an Indian partner. This relaxation does not apply to foreign newspapers which are allowed to print only facsimile editions in India. **Deccan Chronicle** brings out the facsimile edition of the **International Herald Tribune** in India.
- ❖ Noted painter **MF Husain** got a major relief from the Supreme Court, which refused to initiate criminal proceedings against him for allegedly hurting public sentiments through some of his paintings that were dubbed as obscene. Husain's paintings, allegedly depicting Bharat Mata and Hindu gods and goddesses in an obscene manner, had created a furore, following which he had also received threats from right-wing groups.
- ❖ Data on **clinical trials** of genetically-modified (GM) brinjal have been made public by the environment ministry. The development comes even as Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company (Mahyco) had filed a petition before the Delhi High Court to prevent disclosure of the details of clinical trials on **GM brinjal**. **Divya Raghunandan** of Greenpeace had filed an application for disclosure under the RTI Act 2005.
- ❖ Real estate barons **Sushil Ansal and Gopal Ansal** surrendered before a court in Delhi, after the Supreme Court cancelled their bail in the Uphaar cinema fire tragedy case. Fifty-nine people had died in the devastating fire that engulfed the theatre owned by the Ansal brothers here during the matinee show of Bollywood film "Border" on June 13, 1997.
- ❖ The Union Cabinet has approved the signing and ratification of an **extradition treaty with Iran**.
- ❖ **Jagmohan Dalmiya** has once again become **Chairman** of the **Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB)** following a decisive 71-47 win against incumbent **Prasun Mukherjee**.
- ❖ The **Supreme Court** has **allowed** educational institutions in **Andhra Pradesh** to make **admissions** under the four per cent **quota for Muslims**. The SC added that admissions made under the AP Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Class of Muslims Act 2007 would be subject to the judgment on writ petitions challenging its validity before the AP High Court.
- ❖ The **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** has established a "**core library**" of minerals at Akwali village in **Jhunjhunu district** of Rajasthan to systematically preserve the samples and obviate the need to re-drill the areas which have already been explored.
- ❖ The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** has placed orders for the production of **Akash**, a surface-to-air **missile**, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- ❖ The **International Council of Jurists (ICJ)** appointed **S. Prabhakaran**, vice-chairman of the All India Bar Association, as one of its directors at a meeting in Washington recently.
- ❖ The former Chief Justice of India, **Yeshwant Vishnu Chandrachud**, passed away. He was in the majority bench that decided in favour of the Indira Gandhi government in a landmark habeas corpus case.
- ❖ The **Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act**, providing for stringent punishment in cases of religious conversions through force, lure or deceit, has come into force.

- ❖ RBI Governor **Y.V. Reddy** was awarded an **honorary fellowship** by The London School of Economics and Political Science (**LSE**) in recognition of his commitment to the underprivileged.
- ❖ The Union Cabinet approved the **renaming** of **Lucknow airport** as **Chaudhury Charan Singh Airport** by way of paying tributes to the former Prime Minister.
- ❖ The **CPI (M) Polit Bureau** expelled Lok Sabha Speaker **Somnath Chatterjee** on for “seriously compromising the position of the party.”
- ❖ **Norwegian Nobel Committee** chief Ole Danbolt Mjos has revealed that **Mahatma Gandhi's** assassination in 1948 forced the Nobel Prize Committee, which had “unanimously” decided to confer on him the top honour after short-listing the Indian leader for five times, to abandon the plan.
- ❖ The use of **compact fluorescent lamp (CFL)** has been made **compulsory** in government buildings, aided institutions, corporations and autonomous bodies in **Uttar Pradesh**.
- ❖ The **Tamil Nadu** government has promulgated an **ordinance** under which any uncalled for **attack on a doctor** or a medical institution in the State will henceforth **attract imprisonment** of three to 10 years.
- ❖ The **Bar Council of India (BCI)** informed the Supreme Court that it **allowed lawyers** to launch their **own websites** giving basic information about themselves to prospective clients. The BCI prohibits lawyers from advertising their services in any manner.
- ❖ Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has constituted a six-member **experts committee** headed by **Rajendra K. Pachauri**, director-general, Tata Energy Research Institute, to look at an **alternative alignment**, avoiding the Ramar Sethu stretch, for implementing the **Sethusamudram Shipping Channel Project**.
- ❖ The Union Cabinet has approved the setting up of **eight new Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)** at a total cost of **Rs 6,080 crore** over a six-year period. The new IITs will come up in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Gujarat, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. It also gave in-principle approval for converting the Institute of Technology (IT), **Banaras Hindu University** into an Indian Institute of Technology and integrating it with the IIT system in the country.
- ❖ India's **first bullet proof passenger train**—the **Luding-Haflong** train was introduced by **Northeast Frontier railway** for its journey in the trouble-torn hilly terrain of **North Cachar Hills** district of Assam.
- ❖ A day after Lok Sabha Speaker **Somnath Chatterjee** presided over the trust vote, in open defiance of his party's directive to quit the post, the CPI (M) formally expelled him from its primary membership. The 10-time MP, he has been in Parliament since 1971, except for a brief period outside, when he was defeated in the 1984 general election. In 1996, he received the “**best parliamentarian**” award.
- ❖ The **West Bengal Legislative Assembly** has adopted a motion to register its protest against the reported move by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha to carve out a **greater Jharkhand** by annexing three districts of West Bengal — Purulia, Bankura and West Medinipur with itself.
- ❖ The Marxist pioneer and former general secretary of the CPI (M), **Harkishan Singh Surjeet**, passed away recently. Born in 1916 at Ropowal village in Punjab's Jalandhar district, Surjeet began his political career in the freedom struggle during 1932 as an intrepid schoolboy.

- ❖ **Harkishan Singh Surjeet** joined the Communist Party in 1934 — 14 years after its founding and was elected to the Polit Bureau of the undivided Communist Party in 1954 and was one of the founders of the CPI (M) in October-November 1964. Surjeet served as general secretary of the Central Committee of the CPI (M) between Jan 1992 and Apr 2005 before ill health made it impossible for him to continue and **Prakash Karat** succeeded him as general secretary.
- ❖ Himachal Pradesh Director-General of Police **Ashwani Kumar** was appointed **CBI director** in place of **Vijay Shankar**, who retired recently.
- ❖ A stampede on a slender trail leading to the famous hilltop **Naina Devi temple** in **Bilaspur** district of Himachal Pradesh killed 146 people, mainly women and children, and injured about 230.
- ❖ **Akal Takht Jathedar Joginder Singh Vedanti** quit his post alleging he was asked to resign by a top functionary of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee. SGPC president Avtar Singh Makkar, however, said Vedanti quit on health grounds.
- ❖ Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's daughter **Upinder Singh** has authored a book titled "**A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India — From the Stone Age to the 12th Century**" that was released recently.
- ❖ A joint review mission of the Union Government and the World Bank has praised the works launched under the second phase of the **District Primary Education Project (DPEP)** in nine districts of **Rajasthan** between Sept 2000 and Mar 2008 and cited the State's success as an example worthy of emulation by others.
- ❖ President Pratibha Patil on cleared the appointment of Justice **P.D. Dinakaran**, judge of the Madras High Court as the **Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court**.
- ❖ Observing that content of the **advertisement of Axe Dark Temptation Deodorant**, currently being aired, is 'indecent and vulgar', the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has requested the Indian Broadcasting Foundation to advise its member channels to avoid broadcasting it to avoid punitive action in future.
- ❖ **Ghulam Nabi Azad** resigned as Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister after withdrawing his confidence motion at a special session of the Assembly. Governor N.N. Vohra had asked Mr. Azad to prove his majority on the floor of the House following the withdrawal of support by the PDP on June 28. Azad had earlier cancelled the previous Governor's controversial order of transfer of 39.88 hectares of forest land to the **Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board**; the issue on which the PDP withdrew support.
- ❖ The UPA government has transferred **R.S. Gavai**, Governor of Bihar, to Kerala for the remainder of his term. His place in the Raj Bhavan in Patna was taken by **R.L. Bhatia**, Governor of Kerala.
- ❖ The two **wage boards** for working journalists and non-journalists in newspapers and news agencies, headed by **Justice K. Narayana Kurup**, have recommended an interim relief of 30 per cent of basic salary for newspaper employees with effect from January 8, 2008.
- ❖ The Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) on former President **A. P. J. Abdul Kalam** and Wipro Chairman **Azim Premji** at the University's annual convocation recently.

- ❖ The tiger made a comeback to the **Sariska Tiger Reserve (STR)** in Alwar district when a wild tiger was re-introduced recently. The STR, which was brought under Project Tiger in 1978, lost all its tigers in 2004-05 to suspected poaching.
- ❖ The **BrahMos Aerospace** has signed an agreement with **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** for taking up engineering and integration of the space agency's launch vehicles PSLV and GSLV.
- ❖ The Union Cabinet has given its approval for setting up two **schools of planning and architecture** at **Bhopal** and **Vijayawada** at a total cost of Rs.348.5 crore. The institutes would integrate graduate, post-graduate, doctoral and post-doctoral education in architecture and town planning.
- ❖ India and France plan to co-produce surface-to-air missiles (SAM) on the lines of the Indo-Russian 'Brahmos' missile. Termed **Maitri** (Friendship), the Indo-French short-range missile will be offered to the Army for replacing the Russian SAMs, informed Antoine Bouvier, chief executive officer of **MBDA**, one of the world's largest missile manufacturers.
- ❖ The former Union Home Secretary and Union government's interlocutor on Kashmir, **Narendar Nath Vohra**, took over as Governor of Jammu and Kashmir from the former Governor, **S.K. Sinha**.
- ❖ Jammu University Vice-Chancellor **Amitabh Mattoo** has been nominated member of the prestigious National Knowledge Commission. The Commission, headed by Sam Pitroda, coordinates with various Union Ministries and the State governments and reports directly to the Prime Minister.
- ❖ The Union Government will spend a total of Rs1,346 crore on the construction of the 385-km-long **Dandi Heritage Route** between Ahmedabad and Dandi in Surat district where Mahatma Gandhi had defied the British Salt Law after a long march in 1930.
- ❖ The **South Asian Centre for Journalists Reporting Conflict (SCJRC)**, a joint venture of the Press Institute of India (PII) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was inaugurated in Chennai recently. The objective is to uphold freedom of the press and to ensure the protection of those dedicated to journalism
- ❖ DRDO scientists are planning to go ahead with the first full test flight of its indigenously developed air-to-air beyond visual range missile, **Astra**. Only the US, France, Russia and China have so far produced such advance missiles, which enables fighter pilots to lock-on and shoot down enemy aircraft almost 90-120 km away at mach 1.2 to 1.4 speed.
- ❖ A 247-strong contingent of the Indian Air Force participated in the multinational air exercise "**Red Flag 08**," at the Nellis Air Force Base in the US recently.
- ❖ The **Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)** will introduce **reservations in faculty positions** for the first time since their inception. A Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) directive mandates that the apex technical institutes will have to reserve 15 per cent quota for SCs, 7.5 per cent quota for STs and 27 per cent quota for OBCs in faculty positions.
- ❖ Prime Minister Manmohan Singh released a "**national action plan**" on **climate change**. It promised a new emphasis on renewable energy, but did not include specific targets for cutting carbon emissions.

- ❖ Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court **Cyriac Joseph** was sworn in Supreme Court Judge. With this appointment, the number of judges in the apex court has gone up to 24, against the sanctioned strength of 26, including the CJI.
- ❖ Sixteen years after the Mumbai riots, the former Shiv Sena MP, **Madhukar Sarpotdar**, 74, became the first leader from the party to be convicted for his inflammatory speeches. The MP was convicted under Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code and sentenced to a year's simple imprisonment, apart from levying a fine of Rs. 5,000 each.
- ❖ The 104 **Kalka Shimla Railway** is now a **world heritage property** inscribed in **UNESCO's** growing list of natural and cultural marvels. The 96-kilometer long, narrow gauge, mountain railway traverses a difficult Himalayan terrain through a maze of tunnels and galleries.
- ❖ Former UN under secretary general **Shashi Tharoor** has taken over as the chairman of **Afras Academy for Business Communication (AABC)**, a finishing school for youngsters at the Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram.
- ❖ **G K Chadha**, former vice-chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University and member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, has been appointed **Chief Executive Officer** of the **South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) University**.
- ❖ The **Indian government** has declared **2008-09** as **Food Safety and Quality Year**.
- ❖ India's **N S Harsha**, 39, was awarded Britain's prestigious biannual 40,000-pound **Artes Mundi Prize**, which recognises outstanding emerging artists from around the world who discuss the human condition.
- ❖ The Parliamentary Committee on Ministry of Law and Justice, headed by **E M Sudarsana Natchiappan**, in its report placed in Parliament recently, has recommended that all the constitutional authorities, including the **Chief Justice of India**, should come under the ambit of the **Right to Information Act**.
- ❖ The union government has decided to rope in the country's premier institutions like IIMs and IITs to assess the impact of the **National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)**. Ever since the launch of the UPA government's flagship programme, it has been drawing flak from opposition parties as well as the public over poor execution.
- ❖ English daily "The Statesman" has filed a petition in the Delhi High Court seeking the scrapping of the **Justice (Retd.) K. Narayana Kurup Wage Board** for Journalists and Non-Journalists of newspapers and news agencies. The newspaper has alleged that the wage board is stacked with persons known for their pro-labour views and thus its constitution had a pro-labour tilt.
- ❖ The **Supreme Court** has struck down as "**illegal and unconstitutional**" the law enacted by **Parliament fixing 65 years as the age limit** for the director of the **All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)** and restored Dr P. Venugopal to that position. The AIIMS Act was amended following a fallout between Dr Venugopal and Union Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss during the controversy over reservations for OBCs in educational institutions.
- ❖ The minister accused **Dr Venugopal** of instigating the AIIMS staff and students to mount a campaign against the Centre. He persuaded the Union Cabinet to amend the law and get parliamentary approval for a 65-year ceiling on the retiring age of the AIIMS director.

- ❖ The **Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A)** has decided to stick to its recently **hiked fees** for the flagship Post-Graduate Programme in Management (PGP), despite the government appointed **R C Bhargava Review Committee's** recommendations to the contrary.
- ❖ External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee and his Saudi counterpart, Saud Al Faisal have signed an agreement on establishing a **Saudi-India investment fund** that would help kick-start investments in major infrastructure projects in India such as construction of roads, railways, ports, airports as well as petrochemical plants.
- ❖ **President Pratibha Patil** donated Rs. 25 lakh to the **Mayor of Santiago** for the maintenance of a shrine to Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore at Plaza de La during her official visit to Chile recently.
- ❖ The Rajya Sabha has passed the Jawaharlal Institute of Post-Graduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER) Puducherry Bill, 2007 that declares it an institution of national importance.
- ❖ The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** will launch its second moon mission, **Chandrayaan-2**, in 2011 in collaboration with Russian Federal Space Agency, **Roskosmos**.
- ❖ **India and Brazil** have signed four agreements—an extradition treaty, an MoU for co-operation in the oil and natural gas sector, a pact on agriculture co-operation and an agreement in the area of civil defence including humanitarian assistance in the event of natural and manmade disasters during the official visit of **President Pratibha Patil**.
- ❖ **Mayawati** became the first Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister to unveil her own statue when her life-size statue and that of her mentor and founder of the Bahujan Samaj Party, Kanshi Ram, were unveiled at the Samajik Parivartan Prateek Sthal overlooking the Bhimrao Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal on the Gomti embankment in Lucknow.
- ❖ Manmohan Singh's special envoy on the nuclear deal with the US, **Shyam Saran**, was given additional charge as the Prime Minister's **special envoy on climate change**.
- ❖ The government has reconstituted the **National Security Advisory Board (NSAB)** with former Foreign Secretary **K S Bajpai** as the new Chairman.
- ❖ **Shubhashis Gangopadhyay** was appointed as the new adviser to Finance Minister P. Chidambaram in place of **Parthasarathi Shome** who resigned recently.
- ❖ **Brigadier Mohd Amin Naik**, who was commissioned into Corps of Engineers from the IMA on December 22, 1974, became the first Kashmiri Muslim to be elevated to the rank of Major General in the Indian Army recently.
- ❖ Left veterans **Jyoti Basu**, 94, and **Harkishan Singh Surjeet**, 92, retired from the membership of the politburo and central committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), positions they held ever since the launch of the party in 1964, at the 19th Congress of the CPM at Coimbatore. **Prakash Karat** was elected party general secretary for a second term.
- ❖ The Gujarat government has appointed Justice Akshay Mehta to the two-member commission headed by Justice G T Nanavati which is probing the Godhra train carnage and post-Godhra communal riots in 2002 to fill the vacancy caused in the by the death of **Justice K G Shah**.

- ❖ Former deputy prime minister and BJP leader **L K Advani's** autobiography, "**My Country, My Life**", which is 986 pages long and has a foreword by former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was released by former president A P J Abdul Kalam recently.
- ❖ **V K Joshi** has been appointed **Director General** of the **Central Reserve Police Force**. A 1971-batch Bihar Cadre IPS officer, he will continue to hold additional charge as Director General, Indo-Tibetan Border Police.
- ❖ The government has appointed a three-member **committee** comprising Finance Secretary **D Subbarao**, Home Secretary **Madhukar Gupta** and Defence Secretary **Vijay Singh** to look into the **grievances of the armed forces and IPS officers** over the Sixth Pay Commission recommendations.
- ❖ The **UGC Pay Review Committee** has recommended a hike of over 70 per cent in the pay of university and college teachers, besides allowances. The panel, headed by **G.K. Chadha**, submitted its report to UGC chairman S.K. Thorat.
- ❖ The government has approved raising the **income criterion** for the **creamy layer** among the **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** from Rs. 2.5 lakh to 4.5 lakh a year. This will help in bringing more people under the reservation category.
- ❖ The Union government has approved the upgrading and creation of about 2,000 senior-level posts in the armed forces based on the **Ajay Vikram Singh (AVS) Committee** recommendations.
- ❖ The **Time** has named environmentalist **Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal** as one of the 30 "**Heroes of Environment**" for cleaning up Punjab's Kali Bein.
- ❖ The first **Genomic Pioneer Award** from India was given to **Dr Srikanta Kumar Rath** of the Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI), Lucknow. The Hyderabad-based Ocimum Biosolutions has instituted the Genomic Pioneer Awards for outstanding work in genomic research.
- ❖ The **United Nations** has chosen **Sulabh International** as one of the 50 most successful business models targeting the poor. The U.N. Development Programme's latest report, "**Creating value for all: Strategies for doing business with the poor,**" reviews Sulabh International's role in transforming the lives of scavengers in India.