



# Bengali Cultural Society of South Jersey

(A Non-Profit Organization)

## সংস্কৃতি

VOLUME 30, ISSUE I

Winter 2014

### Message from the Editor

Last time I was writing this message, I was expressing hope that you all were enjoying the unseasonably warm weather. Well, to say things have changed just a little over the course of a few months would be understating. The polar vortex as it turns out was among the least significant changes many of us have had to deal with. During the same timeframe, which has showcased the range of Mother Nature's virtuosity, we have had to start learning to cope with the loss of staples in the community, Dilip Pal and Lila Basak. We have had to start becoming accustomed to gatherings where their familiar faces were noticeably absent. We have felt and continue to feel for their families whose struggles I'm sure still feel new and enduring. Seeing them, we wish we could do more but hope that when the time comes and when they need the support of this strong community we are there for them and we hope that this support will at least make the pain slightly more manageable.



We also faced change in what we consider to be home field for our various cultural and religious events. With the ICC complete or at least complete enough, we decided to break it in true Bengali style by hosting, in the brand new facilities, the 2014 Saraswati Puja complete with ilish mach dinner. No other type of food enables me to feel such a complex combination of feelings as this trusty river fish. While consuming, I at the same time feel a sense of nostalgia, satisfaction, and utter fear due to the small bones, which promise to puncture, lodge and choke unless complete focus is exercised. Ok enough about food - I along with the rest of the Executive Committee have discussed that topic ad nauseum (ok maybe that's not possible) during our tenure, where at least 75% of our meetings were spent discussing what to feed you people! Saraswati Puja on the whole was a success. I'd be lying if I wrote that there weren't challenges, but looking around, one was able to see that people, our community, was making the ICC feel like home (field). People were pulling up chairs, doing adda with friends, helping out with tasks, and owning the space including the new nooks and crannies. I reminisced with some of my peer of the fun times that we used to have at the old Voorhees Township Community Hall, which was literally the size of the side room where Saraswati Thakur was positioned. We are used to much less and this will get much better, potentially becoming the best, because this center is actually more of a home than previous venues. We must remember that and treat it as such.

For the Executive Committee, change will culminate during the handover meeting where we will transition duties to the next EC. For many of us, it was the first time serving the community and others were veterans. Elders of the community. It's been a lot of fun working with and getting to know the EC, especially our President Mona Mukherjee. I'm sure she's been frustrated at times with dealing with those who are let's say slightly less experienced, but she handled that and all other challenges graciously, while leading the Committee admirably. Thank you Mona Mashi, thank you Committee, and thank you Community! Abar dhekha hobay!!



#### Executive Committee (2012-2014)

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## In Memoriam



Condolences to Jharna and Rondeep Pal for the loss of their husband and father, Dilip Pal, on November 25th, 2013.

Condolences to the Basak family for the passing of Lila Basak, matriarch, on January 14th, 2014.

Condolences to Aparajita Mitra and family for the loss of her mother, Bulbul Bose, on January 31st, 2014.

## Local Events and Activities

- March 8th. The Committee invites BCSSJ members to our Annual Function from 5 pm - 9 pm on Saturday, March 8 at the Indian Cultural Center. Please make sure to RSVP to [committee@bcssj.org](mailto:committee@bcssj.org) if you plan to attend and have not already.
- February 28 - March 9th. The PHS Philadelphia Flower Show. The PHS Philadelphia Flower Show is an annual event at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in March. It is the world's oldest and largest indoor flower show, attracting more than 260,000 people annually. The Show features large-scale gardens, elaborate landscapes, and over-the-top floral creations. Visit [theflowershow.com](http://theflowershow.com) for more info.
- March 1st, 7pm. Music Lovers Club Presents Sufi Night @ The ICC Performance by Asad Abbas featuring music from Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Rahat Fateh Ali Khan along with other Sufi masters. For more information, please call Syed Mohammed (609.458.6786)
- April 12th & 13th. ICC Announces Grand Opening Ceremony on April 12th & 13th 2014. Please see website for more info: <http://www.iccofsj.org/>.
- April 20th. EKAL Annual Fundraising Event. Enjoy kathak, folk and dances based on Bollywood music at Padmashri. Featuring award winner: Aditi Bhagwat. Tickets can be purchased by going online ([www.ekal.org](http://www.ekal.org)) or calling Harshad & Dr. Hema Mehta @ 856.77.0358.
- First Fridays. Want proof of Philadelphia's happening art scene? On the first Friday evening of every month the streets fill with art lovers of all kinds who wander among the neighborhood's 40-plus galleries, most of them open from 5 until 9 p.m. **Where?** A large number of galleries can be found between Front and Third, and Market and Vine Streets.

## Verbal & Math Enrichment Classes - Sundays Mornings from 10 - 12



Bengali Cultural Society has been conducting Verbal and Math Enrichment tutorial classes for the benefit of high school students from the Community for almost twenty years. This year, with the move to the ICC and increased exposure to the Indian Community as a whole, is promising to be the most active year ever.

Classes are held every Sunday during the academic year from 10 AM to 12 noon except during certain holidays. Instruction is provided by volunteers.

Any members willing to volunteer in this effort and interested parents are requested to come forward and contact any of the following

individuals: Tapan Ganguly (856-809-0371) / Swapan Saha (856-596-1058) / Pradeep Banerjee (856-616-9051).

## Random Bits of Business

### **Changes to Mega Power Policy Cleared**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has relaxed its criteria for power generation projects to qualify as mega power projects. This will qualify 15 additional projects under the mega power project policy. The mega power policy will allow thermal power projects of 1,000 Mega Watts and hydro power projects of 500 MW and above to import equipment duty-free.

### **India & United States Sign USD 645 Million Deal for Six Super Hercules Aircraft**

The Indian Air Force (IAF) already has a fleet of six similar planes which are deployed for carrying out special operations. This new lot of six planes will be headquartered at Panagarh in West Bengal and will serve as the base for the army's Mountain Strike Corps along the China border.

### **The West Bengal Government Has Cleared 3 Projects With a Combined Value of INR 18 Billion**

The West Bengal government has given approval for three projects in the state which will include the Integrated Textile Park at Belur, the Banarhat Eco Tourism Park in South 24-Parganas district and the Silk Park at Malda. These projects are expected to attract an investment of INR 18 billion over the next two years. The state will be floating a global tender for the Eco tourism park at Banarhat.. Apart from star category resorts, the project will be housed over 100 acres and promote budget hotels, craft villages, convention centers and a youth hostel.

### **Cabinet Approves INR 15.01 Billion for KoPT**

The Union Cabinet has approved a proposal for the extension of financial assistance to Kolkata Port Trust (KoPT) for the purposes of meeting dredging expenditure.

### **Whistling Group to Set Up University in Gujarat with Oxford Univ Subsidiary**

THE Whistling Group, an industrial group of Gujarat, has signed a consulting agreement with Isis Innovation Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the University of Oxford. To be called 'Whistling University, the new university will offer postgraduate training in alternative and conventional energy management, and will establish its own research programs.. It will also promote women's participation in the field of alternative energy.

### **Birlasoft buys EnablePath of US**

Birlasoft, a mid-sized Information Technology Services company, will be augmenting its delivery expertise in cloud Computing services within the Customer Relationship Management space, by acquiring Atlanta based EnablePath, a CRM software provider. The Noida based company which employees 4000 people, plans to go public in 2016

### **HCL Tech & CSC Join Hands for App Modernization Services**

HCL Technologies and Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) have teamed up to offer application modernization services such as creating new formats for existing apps. This alliance has already tasted success by being able to rope in AT&T as its first client for the conversion of the entity's Unix based applications onto a Linux platform.

## ICC News



**Indian Cultural Center (ICC)**  
**820 Route 73 South**  
**Marlton, NJ 08053**  
(Non-Profit Tax Exempt Organization)  
Tax ID # 22-3579469  
**[www.iccofsj.org](http://www.iccofsj.org)**

January 2014

Twenty five years ago, five individuals had a dream to have an Indian Community Center in South Jersey. That dream is now a reality due to the hard work of countless volunteers, community members, and our supporters. Our South Jersey community has reached an important milestone in this long journey.

As you know it has taken us more than twelve years to obtain the required permits and complete the construction of our 20,500+ sq. ft. center which includes one of the largest assembly hall in South Jersey, a stage and many more accommodations. The facility also includes a library, game room, music room and multiple rooms for children, youth, and senior citizen activities. We expect the center to play a major role in promoting and preserving our Indian culture among the 2,500 families that live within the area.

The Indian Cultural Center (ICC) opened its doors to the community with a magnificent vastu puja (house warming) ceremony on Sunday, December 15th, 2013, followed by a popularly attended New Year's Eve celebration.

As an organization, BCS has supported ICC in every means from the beginning. BCS members are actively involved in the ICC Board and every aspect of the ICC progress. We sincerely thank the members who have contributed to fulfill BCS's donation pledge to ICC. We thank you for your generosity, faithfulness and continued commitment to this project. Achieving our shared dream would not be possible without your support.

Regarding our finances, we are at a very crucial stage of fund raising and still need to raise an additional 1 million dollar in new pledges and fulfill our outstanding pledges to complete our project. We respectfully request all the members to make personal donation to ICC directly so that every family has a sense of personal involvement in this great community project. Without everyone's participation, project of this magnitude is not achievable. If you have already contributed, do consider donating additional funds. Please send in your donation to ITA-CC, c/o Manu Dadhanian, 34 Callison Lane, Voorhees, NJ 08043.

The ICC facility administrator, Mr Ramnick Dadhanian, has been appointed and the facility is currently available for booking. Facility bookings have already started for private events. For information and facility tours please make sure you contact the ICC administrator prior to your visit to the site. You can reach the ICC office at the following office phone numbers:

**ICC Main Office: (856) 267-5633 and (856) 267-5638**

Visiting Hours: Tuesday – Sunday 10AM – 12PM and 6PM – 9PM

Sincerely,

Board Members of ICC

## A Gift of Music

We [the Board Members of the ICC] extend our sincere thanks to the Chakrabarti family (Dr Paritosh and Srimati Chakrabarti) for another generous donation of \$50,000 to the ICC. A Music Room, at the ICC, will be named in memory of Srimati Chakrabarti's mother, Renuka Som. This Music Room will provide Music Awareness Programs for the entire community and is considered to be A Gift for Music from the Chakrabarti family to the community with a mission to provide open access to piano, other musical instruments and innovative performance opportunities that incorporate the art disciplines.

## Kolkata Khobor

### Civil Rights Activist Jesse Jackson to Visit Kolkata

(The Times of India)

Prominent US civil rights activist and politician reverend Jesse Louis Jackson arrived on his maiden visit to Kolkata this past Sunday evening. Rev. Jackson, a two-time US Presidential candidate and former Senator, has a host of engagements in the city before he departs for Delhi on February 26th evening.



Reverend Jackson is hosted during his four-day visit by Young Horizons which runs educational institutions, including free schools for children from economically weaker families, in Kolkata and South 24-Parganas. Monday morning will see Rev Jackson open a festival for children of four free schools of South 24-Parganas run by Young Horizons and inaugurate the annexe building on one such school at Bhagabatipur near Lakshmikantapur. He spoke on 'Mission of the Church in the 21st century' at St Paul's Cathedral on the 24th and then addressed a trans-national conclave on 'Education Liberates' at Kala Mandir later that day. His last engagement for Monday was an address to Bengal Club members.

Reverend Jackson is scheduled to open a new community school started by Young Horizons at Sonarpur for children whose parents work in the fire-cracker industry at on Tuesday morning. Other stops during his visit will include Mother House, an anti-child trafficking project run by 'New Light' at Kalighat, and Indian Institute of Management, where he will address students and faculty on 'Management for a More Humane Future'. He will also visit a Missionaries of Charity project in the slums of Kidderpore that was inaugurated

by former US Defense Secretary Robert Mcnamara while he was President of the World Bank. Rev. Jackson is planning on interacting with young people living in the slums.

### Kolkata Airport Gets 'Best Improvement Award'

(Business Standard)



Kolkata airport has been judged as most improved airport in the Asia Pacific region in a service quality award. The Airport Council International which carries out surveys at 285 airports around the world has ranked Delhi and Mumbai airports as second and fifth best amongst airports handling 25-40 million passengers annually. Hyderabad airport was ranked second amongst airports handling 5-15 million passengers.

The awards are given on the basis of airport service quality surveys which consider passengers' immediate appraisal from check-in through departure at the gate at more than 285 airports. These awards represent passengers' views on 34 key service indicators and are an objective and accurate indicator of the top world-wide performing airports.

Haikou airport in China has bagged the award for best airport in 5-15 million passengers category while Seoul Incheon airport was number one in 25-40 million passengers category. Singapore's Changi airport was ranked number one for service quality amongst airports handling over 40 million passengers.

### Soon Kolkata Cops May Be Able to Snoop on Citizens

(Times of India)

Even as the US snoopgate debate continues to reverberate across the globe, Kolkata Police might now be a step away

from acquiring its own lawful interception unit that can snatch any call, SMS, mail and even fax from the air if it is deemed suspicious.

The tender closes by the end of this month and sources in Kolkata Police say the response has been "positive." The anti-terror Special Task Force already has a similar unit in its control room (Shambunath Kow's arrest was one of its biggest successes), the new unit will have far greater reach and depth.

Police officers explained that Lawful interception (LI) involves obtaining communications network data for analysis or evidence. The system can intercept any forms of data, which means everything you send electronically can potentially be under survey. However, this surveillance will be mounted only on "suspects" after permission from the highest authorities, said an officer.

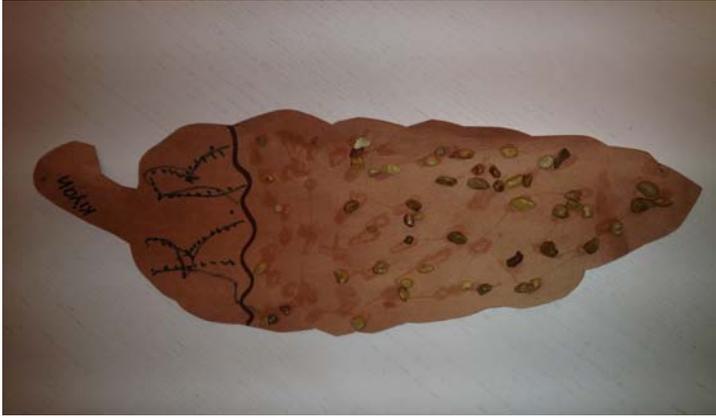
The new tool will go a long way in revolutionizing how Kolkata Police operates as a modern force. Its use though, has been contested, as it will allow law agencies to snoop on private lives. The matter was earlier debated in the home ministry after allegations that BJP leader Arun Jaitley's phone was "tapped" by private detective agencies in connivance with a few Delhi police personnel.



Among the features documented in the master plan that was drawn up as early as 2011, there are provisions for simultaneous support for up to 256 interception devices, extensive system monitoring and multi-switch and multi-vendor support. More importantly, police want the inclusion of centralized "tap management" provisioning software through which telecom and IP switches can be programmed from anywhere. The system was supposed to have been in operation by now, but problems continue to dog the ambitious project.

## From the Community

### Art by Kiyen Raval



### Art by Jonah Goldberg



### In Loving Memory of Ginger (2/17/96—1/10/14)

The Basu Family would like to thank the BCS community for your outpouring of love and support during the loss of our Ginger. We cannot thank you all enough.

Sincerely, Tushar/Krishna/Jhum/Tum/Davender



To our Ginger Bear,

We love and miss you more than words can say. Thank you for the best 17 years of our lives! Have fun running around and playing ball. Eat lots of handurdurs, tookies, bhathu, mangsho and pauruti with chai, until we're together again.

## From the Community

Essay by Alisha Desai

### Curious Minds Lead to Discoveries and Creativity

"We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths." Walt Disney

My mom always tells me that I was curious since I was a little baby. I always wanted to see, touch and feel everything that was around me. When I started crawling, I would hold onto things so I could see better and open up every cabinet in the house. I was a real busy body.

Growing up as a toddler my favorite TV show was Curious George. The main characters in the series are George and the Man with the Yellow Hat. George loved new adventures and his curiosity and spirit to discover new things always led him to trouble. The Man with the Yellow Hat appeared just in time to get him out of trouble. George could do things that kids could not do. He could paint a room from the inside. He could hang from a kite in the sky. He could let the animals out of their pens on the farm. He could do all these naughty things that any kid would like to do. As a child it was easy to believe one could hang from a kite. I would always ask myself how and why George was able to do things that I could not.

What happens when you are curious? A curious mind asks a lot of questions like who, what, where, why and how. When you ask many questions, you want the answers. If you do not ask questions you will never learn new things and your mind will never grow. If you are never curious then you won't ever discover new things or you won't ever invent.

We are curious every minute of our lives. But most of the time we do not realize it. When we do not know how to do something we always come up with creative ways to solve the problem. Everyone thinks differently. When I ask my best friend how she would solve a particular problem, her solution is so different from mine. I do not think there is any right or wrong solution, it is just different and this difference makes it creative.

Curiosity leads to learning. In school my teacher is always trying to increase my curiosity. In whatever we do she always asks questions like how, why and where did it happen. Who did it? Sometimes everyone in the class has a different answer or a solution. So curiosity can mean wondering, confusion and interest, which may lead to creativity or invention.

My mother uses the word experiment a lot in whatever I do. If I am mixing colors and creating a new one, I am being creative. If I am baking cookies with her and sometimes I skip a step just to see what may go wrong I am both curious and creative.

In school we have learnt curious minds lead to great discoveries. Recently, we studied about Sir Isaac Newton who saw an apple fall from the tree, which made him wonder why everything falls downwards. Then he discovered the force of gravity. We celebrate Columbus Day every year to remember the discovery of Americas by Christopher Columbus. Columbus was curious about discovering new land so he sailed from Europe westward and just discovered the Americas.

As Walt Disney said our curiosity leads us to paths of creativity and discovery or as the definition in the dictionary states 'the use of imagination or original ideas.' What a painter or a dancer creates from curiosity is different from the discovery of electricity or the telephone. Both are a result of a curious mind.

## Good Wishes to Ghanshyam Adikhari for Taking On the South Pole Marathon!

January 12, 2014

### PREPARATION - A TASTE OF ANTARCTICA

Written By: Ghanshyam Adikhari

Would you believe that Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2014 when the temp was 5 F (-15 C) with bone chilling winds howling at 30 to 40 mph plunging the temp further below -15 F (-25 C), I was sweating. No, I was not inside running on a treadmill. I was outside running to prepare myself for the last continent marathon in Antarctica. By this time, you may or may not know that I have been confirmed to participate in Antarctica marathon on March 9, 2014.

So I started running in November 2013. Mostly the average temp during my runs in Nov and Dec was around high twenties to freezing 32 F (0 C) with wind chill lowering the temp to low twenties and I got used to this coldness. But this is not enough as the weather in Antarctica is very brutal - cold with fiercest wind even though I will be in Antarctica summer and I will be running in Antarctica Peninsula –coastal region of Antarctica where temp is a shade better than the interior. I have been instructed to prepare myself to face the worst scenario which is 0 F (-17 C) with winds blowing 30 to 40 mph. So when last Tuesday, Arctic blast or Polar Vortex whatever you call it engulfed the entire North-East region with temp and winds as stated. I could not pass this near perfect opportunity. It was the coldest day in two decades. Alaska, Russia was warmer than us.

I had a tough time in getting out of my bed in the morning. I couldn't motivate my mind to the idea of self inflicted torture by exposing myself to this Arctic blast. I was very cozy in my bed with blanket covering my body but as soon as the thought of last chance and final step towards completing my seven continent running hit my brain, I sprang to legs.

I had to dress up properly in layers to fight this cold. The trick is the layering system (Base Layer, Thermal Layer and Wind Layer) necessary to keep warm while being light enough to undertake a physical challenge. The base layer will insulate and wick the sweat from the body keeping the body dry. A middle fleece layer will provide insulation and the outer layer should be windproof, water repellant and breathable. I had two pairs of gloves with hand warmer packet inside, the outer gloves being Gore-tex mittens. For my feet, I put on 1 pair of nylon sock liners and 1 pair of thick wool socks with toe warmer packet placed in between. I covered my legs with running pants with a liner in it. I placed my beanie over my head covering my ear and on top of it; I pulled my hood of my outer jacket to cover my face as much as possible. I grabbed my water bottle filled with electrolyte Gatorade and out I went around 9am.

As soon as I stepped outside, drifting snows due to high winds greeted me by blasting on my uncovered portion of my face. It felt like sandblasting. For a moment, I thought of going back inside but I didn't and started running. But within five minutes, I was grasping for my breath. I stopped running and started walking. Is it due to the bitter cold -15 F / -25 C and winds gusting to 40 mph? Soon I realized that I added extra 8 lbs on my body to face this weather and it is not possible to run my usual pace 11 minutes a mile. So I decided to slow down my pace and continued running again.

It was a clear day with blue skies and bright sunlight. But even then Almighty Sun failed to provide any warmth to surface and temp remained the same. At the beginning I was feeling fine but as the hour went by, I started to have some problems. Some of my running routes became a wind tunnel and I was running against it. My lips and nose was becoming frozen. So I put my head down and buried my lips in the collar of my jacket. I could not see the road as my head was down. I could see only my feet and a couple of yards ahead. Time to time I had to lift my head to scan the road in front. Then I could not carry the water bottle in my hand. The water bottle had a nylon jacket over it. Still, it became so cold that even with gloves and hand warmers; I started feeling burning sensation on my fingers holding to it. So I put the bottle inside my jacket pocket. And that's the way I ran continuously for two hours when some more problems got me worried.

First of all my nose became so hard that I had no sensation as if it was about to crack into several pieces. Then the problem of my runny nose came. My nose becomes runny whenever I run in cold weather. Medically defined as Rhinitis made my moustache like icicles or rather I would say tiny ice picks. My thumb started tingling a little bit. The hand warmers are rated to provide six hours of heat but it seemed that they didn't have enough capacity (cont'd on next page).

## Good Wishes to Ghanshyam Adikhari for Taking On the South Pole Marathon!

to combat this cold temp. My water bottle was full of ice granules. Literally it got transformed into Slurpee – a frozen drink jamming the mouth of the bottle. Instead of drinking, I was sucking the ice crystal and all my teeth started revolting. I was planning to run for four hours. So another two hours to go but I didn't want to take a chance of frostbite. So I headed home thinking about covering my nose and lips and adding another layer of gloves (3 pairs) to prepare for the next arctic blast. Inside my home, I took off my beanie and found a sheet of ice size of my forehead formed on the beanie. So all my sweat on my forehead transformed into a sheet of ice. It lay against my forehead and I ran with it without feeling anything. The ice was warmer than the brutal temp I was facing. Go figure. Really it was amazing.

Most of us including myself don't know much about Antarctica. We spent our geography classes studying Europe, Africa, Americas and other continents except Antarctica. Simply, Antarctica details were not essential. Since I have to go there and run, I have started to know just about as much as everyone else which is to say very little. We probably know more about Mars. Below are some facts and figures (from "Into Antarctica" by Rebecca Rhoades) I have gathered which may enlighten your knowledge about Antarctica:

- Antarctica is a continent jointly administered by fifty nations who have research base there but no one country owns it. Signature nations are guided by "Antarctic Treaty". Antarctica covers 5.4 million square miles. Comparatively, the U.S. covers only 3.6 square miles. It is also larger than Europe and Australia.
- Antarctica includes South Pole and is the driest, windiest, emptiest and coldest place on earth.
- An ice sheet averaging 1.2 miles thick and accounting for 90 percent of world's ice and 70 percent of its fresh water covers 98 percent of Antarctica's surface.
- Despite its large amount of ice, Antarctica has very little rainfall-only about eight inches annually. As such, the continent is classified as a desert..
- The mean annual temp at the South Pole is -76 F (-60 C) in winter and -18 F (-27 C) in summer. Thank God, We will be running in the coastal region of Antarctica Peninsula where temp is a shade warmer.
- No land mammals live on Antarctica. Polar bears are found in the Arctic – not Antarctica.
- Antarctica is the empire of Penguins. Several species are found in Antarctica – Adelle, Gentoo, Chinstrap, Rockhopper, King and Macaroni.
- The population is zero. There are no permanent residents or native peoples on Antarctica. More than 4000 scientists (the number decreases to about 1000 in winter) operate research bases on the continent. About 35,000 tourists visit during the summer. So far only 1.5 million people out of world population of 7 billion have visited Antarctica. My grandsons will be proud of my ranking after visiting there. For information, now everyone will be able to visit Antarctica. All it will take is a quick trip to Orlando, Florida. SeaWorld Orlando has opened its newest, largest and most ambitious attraction ever - ANTARCTICA: EMPIRE OF THE PENGUIN

Most tourists who visit Antarctica visit the Antarctic Peninsula which is accessible from Argentina and Chile during the austral summer season of November through March. Warmer than the rest of the continent, this part of Antarctica is called the Banana Belt

It is said that you need three Ds to do a marathon in a place like Antarctica. Desire (after completing six continents I have no other choice but to have desire), Discipline (which I have definitely maintained throughout my life) and Dementia or Crazy – I admit which I am now 100 percent. Not only that, I am driving others crazy – my families and friends. What I think now, my biggest challenge is to stay healthy till I set my foot on Antarctica – no sickness, no flu, no injury. Once I set my foot on Antarctica, I know my mind will bring out the monster when "the going gets tough, the tough gets going".

God bless.

## Inaugural Saraswati Puja at the ICC - February 8, 2014

Saraswati Puja this year was held at the brand new Indian Cultural Center in Marlton. As you can see from the pictures below, the community came together as always to celebrate, put on a great show, and of course enjoy delicious food!



## Sports

### Sochi 2014: Indian Athletes Permitted to Walk Under Tricolor for Closing Ceremonies

(NDTV.com; BBC.com; CNN.com; Reuters—photo)



The three Indian athletes who competed at Sochi were permitted to walk under the Indian flag for the closing ceremonies. What might seem perfectly normal and even expected for international athletes to do at Olympic games was cast in a dubious light for at least the early part of the games.

During the opening ceremonies, luger Shiva Keshavan, alpine skier Himanshu Thakur and cross-country skier Nadeem Iqbal were forced to march behind the Olympic flag rather than that of their nation. This was due to a ban on India's Olympic Association for breaching the Olympic charter by appointing officials accused of corruption.

India was initially suspended from the Olympic fold in December 2012 after the Indian Olympic Association elected Lalit Bhanot, who spent 11 months in jail on corruption charges, to a top post. The situation remained deadlocked for months, as the Indian association refused to bow to the IOC's demands for changes. But the IOC said Tuesday, February 11th, that it had ended the suspension following the Indian association's

general assembly and elections for a new board on Sunday, February 9th, where Narayna Ramachandran, the president of the World Squash Federation was voted in as the new president of the Indian association.

"It is the first time in Olympic history that a suspension of an NOC (National Olympic Committee) has been lifted during an Olympic Games," the IOC said in a statement released on the same day the ban was lifted.

"It was a bad feeling I think at the opening ceremony because I was under the IOC flag," the 20-year-old alpine skier Thakur had said. "It was a bad feeling because I was not representing my country. After February 11, the IOC gave us our country back because of the fresh elections. I'm proud to put the flag up (in the athletes village). My parents, teacher and friends are very proud. The closing ceremony, under my own flag will be nice," he added.

Thakur finished the giant slalom competition in last place (72 out of 72), Iqbal, the first athlete from Jammu and Kashmir to qualify for the Winter Olympics, finished the cross-country skiing race in 85th position, and veteran luger Keshavan finished in 37th place out of 39 participants.

### Naveen Gov't Mulls to Promote Adventure Tourism

(Telegraphindia.com)

**Bhubaneswar:** Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Odisha, and his administration are all set to take the 'plunge' to promote water sports on beaches within the state. The huge footfall at the annual India Surf Festival, which kicked off at Ramachandi beach in Konark on February 14th, has prompted the state's tourism department to explore opportunities which may exist in the area aquatic sports.

Since 2011, when Sanjay Samantray manifested the India Surf Festival, Ramachandi beach has been a major center for water sports events. Samantray said of the conditions at Ramachandi Beach, "We knew that the waves here are just perfect for stand-up paddling and wind surfing. We wish to make Odisha the top surfing destination of the country." The state government is planning on building off that momentum by putting in place facilities at Goplapur beach, which adventure sports enthusiasts will be able to enjoy year round.



Also, around the time of the inaugural Surf Festival, Sabir Baksh, well-known Odia diver, set up his Kalinga Divers Foundation on the same beach. The Foundation provides training offerings to diverse groups, from cadets of the National Disaster Response Force to sportspersons who wish to learn wind surfing. "This region has so much potential, but it has hardly been explored. Water sports need high waves and good winds, too. But, some activities need a calmer sea. Our beaches are really made for this since they are not rocky like those on the Arabian Sea-side," said Baksh.

Efforts of Samantray and Baksh seem to have started paying dividends, as the administration is now ready to plan water sport facilities on these same beaches. Tourism and culture department secretary Arabinda Padhee, who was present at the inauguration of the India Surf Festival, has promised support to the hosts in organizing the festival.

On another productive note, Baksh, with the support of the Ganjam district administration, hosted a daylong event two weeks ago which offered a wide range of water sport activities on Gopalpur beach. The activities included speed boating, kayaking, yachting, paddle boating and wind surfing. According to Baksh, "The event received great boost from the district administration and officials of the Gopalpur notified area council. They have encouraged the event and suggested me to come up with some ideas to organize these events more often at this beach."

Krishan Kumar, who was the district collector of Ganjam till yesterday, said there were indeed plans to introduce these activities as regular sporting options for tourists as well as local people of the district. "We have already identified a space for the same. The only issue is finding a developer for the facilities. We do not have many developers for water sport infrastructure in the state," Kumar says.

## Arts & Culture

### Choice Tidbits From the Indian Movie Scene

#### An Indian Appetizer, Subtly Spiced

#### 'The Lunchbox', a Bollywood anomaly comes to America

(nytimes.com)



Directed by Ritesh Batra; Starring Irrfan Khan, Nimrat Kaur, and Nawazuddin Siddiqui

Mumbai has traditionally spawned a film industry as over the top as it is, with movies that clutch viewers by the throat and assault them with glamour, pizzazz and dancing. Lots of dancing.

So it is a rare event when a quiet movie of unexpressed anguish and yearning emerges from this brash city. "[The Lunchbox](#)" opens in the United States on Friday, February 28th, with a small story about the fragile connection between an aging widower smelling his own mortality and a despairing young housewife that offers American audiences an unusually accessible portrait of the sometimes desperate lives of urban middle-class Indians.

#### International Indian Film Academy announces nominations for 'Bollywood Oscars' in Tampa

(tampabay.com)

Finalists for the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards — a.k.a. the "Bollywood Oscars" — were announced February 20th, serving as an invitation list for a weekend of festivities slated in Tampa, April 23-26.

Leading all films with 10

nominations is Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, based on the turbulent life of Milkha "The Flying Sikh" Singh, a world-class sprinter at the 1960 Olympics in Rome.

Tied for second place overall with seven nominations each are Goliyon Ki Rasleela Ram-Leela (or Ram-Leela, for short), a modern — and edgy, by Bollywood standards — retelling of Romeo and Juliet, and Aashiqui 2, a gritty star-is-born love affair among pop musicians. The romantic drama Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani is close behind with six nominations.

Most acting categories represented were typical for award shows, with



two notable exceptions: competitions for best performances in comic and "negative," or villainous roles. There are also unique categories for best male and female "playback singer," since most Bollywood movies include musical numbers, even dramas like Bhaag Milkha Bhaag. This year marks IIFA's first trip to the United States, after 14 programs held in such locales as Macau, London and Singapore.

#### Sri Lanka War Film Released Online in India After Censorship

(timesofindia.com)

The director of a controversial war film on Sri Lanka streamed it free online in India this past weekend,

after censors banned its theatrical release over fears it may strain friendly ties with Colombo.

Callum Macrae, the British director of "No Fire Zone: The Killing Fields of Sri Lanka", said the film will also be available free in Malaysia, Nepal and Sri Lanka — the other countries where its general screening has been banned.

The 93-minute film is a collection of footage recorded in Sri Lanka's northeast by doctors, civilians, rebels and soldiers as the government allegedly bombarded areas teeming with refugees trying to flee the fighting.

The documentary has been contested by the Sri Lankan government as propaganda to discredit Colombo in the eyes of the international community.

Macrae said India's reluctance to release the film hurt him the most, given the country's deep-rooted tradition of democracy and free speech.

"I find it very disturbing that a



country whose independent history is rooted in the struggle for democratic rights and free speech should have taken what is, in effect, an act of overt political censorship," he was quoted as saying in the statement.

*Bengali Cultural Society of South Jersey*  
(A Non-Profit Organization)

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**সংস্কৃতি**

We are on the web  
[www.bcassj.org](http://www.bcassj.org)



## Upcoming Events

The **2014 Annual Function** is scheduled for March 8th, 2014 at the Indian Cultural Center in Marlton, NJ.

Additional details are available on our website: [www.bcassj.org](http://www.bcassj.org).

