Man of the Month

Nelson Mandela

In this Issue:

P3  Cover Story – Nelson Mandela
P5  Quotes from Dr Abdul Kalam
P7  Ancient Indian Wisdom - Flute
P8  Fall of Soviet Union
P10 From the archives – RTI Act
P11 Cartoon Page
P12 Devyani issue - controversy
P15 Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)

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From the Desk of Editor-in-Chief

We are pleased to release the 81st Edition (Dec 2013) of your ezine PreSense with rich contents. In this issue, we have featured Dr Nelson Mandela, a legendary leader who passed away recently in South Africa. Mr Ponraj, our Editorial Advisor has shared his personal experience with him.

Many youngsters are not aware of the background of the fall of mighty Soviet Union in 1991. During those times, both India and Soviet Union were facing similar financial difficulties for different reasons. The economic reforms introduced by Soviet in 1985 led to disaster in 1991. In the same year, when Soviet got dissolved due to reforms, India introduced the same type of reforms, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. India succeeded in introducing economic reforms. We have featured the fall of Soviet Union and the reasons for the fall.

The recent controversy over Devyani Khobragade’s arrest in US has led to serious diplomatic strain between US and India. We have examined the issue in detail. In addition, you will find various interesting articles, including the Prince cartoon.

We hope you will enjoy this edition too. Please send us your feedback.

Editorial team wishes all the readers a very happy New Year.

K. Srinivasan

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Sansad Ratna Awards 2014

www.sansadratna.in

This ezine PreSense honours the top performing Lok Sabha Members for the past four years since 2010. Sansad Ratna 2014 event will be held at Indian Institute of Technology Madras on Saturday the 15th February.

Shri Karia Munda ji, Hon’ble Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha will present the Awards.

9 MPs who have crossed 1000 points (Debates + Private Members Bills + Questions) and 3 toppers among the Women MPs will be honoured with Sansad Ratna Awards.

For more details, please visit www.sansadratna.in
Cover Story

Saluting Nelson Mandela who showed indomitable spirit and forgiveness, despite being tortured

The whole world shed tears when the news was flashed that Dr Nelson Mandela passed away on 5th December 2013 at his 95th age. Mandela was imprisoned for more than 27 years in South Africa for fighting against the apartheid.

‘Apartheid’ is the racial discrimination enforced against the majority ‘blacks’ by the minority ‘white’ rulers in South Africa. Even Gandhiji was a victim of this discrimination. He was thrown out of a first class railway compartment. That made Gandhiji to return to India to fight against British rulers.

After 27 years of imprisonment, Dr Nelson Mandela was released in 1990. Dr. Mandela negotiated with President F. W. de Klerk to abolish apartheid and to establish multiracial elections in 1994. In the elections held in 1994 he led the African National Congress (ANC) to victory and became South Africa's first black President. He published his autobiography in 1995. He served as the President of South Africa till 1999.

Indian Government honoured him with ‘Bharat Ratna’ Award in 1990. He also received Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. During his Presidentship, he dismantled the apartheid and racial discrimination.

Editorial Advisor of this ezine PreSense Mr V Ponraj (Scientific Advisor to Dr APJ Abdul Kalam) shares his memories when he accompanied Dr APJ Abdul Kalam to South Africa in 2004.

Quote

I had a great experience when I visited South Africa in the year 2004 along with Dr APJ Abdul Kalam as a part of official delegation when he was the 11th President of India. I
had the honour of meeting and shaking hands with Dr Nelson Mandela, the legendary personality who was responsible for the freedom of South Africa fighting tirelessly against the apartheid.

We travelled by helicopter to Robben Island from Cape Town in 10 minutes. By fast powered boat it may take 30 minutes to reach the Robben Island. This is the island where Dr Nelson Mandela was imprisoned. When we reached the Island, we felt the silence, except sea roaring. We were received at the Island by Mr. Ahmed Kathrada a South African, who was a co-prisoner.

Can you imagine a tiny room, where sleeping and all human needs have to be fulfilled? It has to be remembered that Dr. Nelson Mandela, who was 6 feet tall was imprisoned in that small room for 26 years – fighting against the apartheid. The major part of his life was spent in this silent Island.

He used to be taken for quarrying in the nearby mountain for a few hours in bright sun which damaged his eyes. In spite of his body being tortured, he exhibited to the world the “indomitable spirit” in him. During that time, he wrote a manuscript of freedom in tiny letters every day, when the jail wardens went to sleep. This small tiny lettered manuscript finally became the famous book of Mandela “A long walk to freedom”.

Later we visited the train in which Gandhiji travelled from Pietermaritzburg Railway station and was thrown out due to apartheid. That experience made Gandhi to throw the Britishers out from India on 15 Aug 1947.

Quoting these two legendary persons like Mr Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Abdul Kalam used to advise the youth to learn two big lessons viz (1) indomitable spirit and (2) virtue of forgiveness.

Unquote

**PreSense** shares the grief with billions of Dr Mandela’s admirers. May his soul rest in peace.

By Sukruti A Vadula, Editorial Team
Inspiring Quote from the Speech of Dr Abdul Kalam

“Women empowerment”

Technology Leadership: Now I would like to discuss about Smt. Tessy Thomas who is taking a leadership role in a scientific project. Born in 1963 at Alleppey, Smt. Tessy Thomas has been facing continuous challenges in her life. Having lost her father early in life, she had to stand on her own. Schooling in convent, she graduated in Electrical Engineering from Trichur Engineering College. By then, having decided to pursue work on aerospace systems, she did her Masters from IAT, Pune in Guided Missiles in 1987 and was immediately taken up for teaching in the faculty of Guided Missiles. She joined the premier missile labs in Hyderabad in 1988 and participated in the development of Inertial navigation system, path breaking Energy Management Guidance for Long Range missiles, Mission Planning and simulation. She has made pioneering contributions in AGNI missile programme. From being the Mission designer to leading the project was a natural progression and a true recognition of her capabilities. Today, she is heading a project for development of one of the most complex state-of-art Long range Missile systems.

All these achievements were made possible only by her determination and confidence. She was one among the few lady scientists, who took over scientific job as their career. Her perseverance, ability to withstand technical challenges, update knowledge, and ability to take over responsibilities are few of her qualities, which has brought her to this cadre. The path lit by her is now a beacon for many aspiring young girls, showing that today’s world is open for women, if they are willing to accept the challenge.

Verbatim reproduced from www.abdulkalam.com
greet all readers a very happy and prosperous New Year 2014, National Youth Day 12th Jan 2014 & Sankarananthi

"Vivekananda is the maker of modern India" – Netaji Subash Chandra Boise

"Vivekananda's influence increased my love for my country a thousand fold." – Mahatma Gandhi
Margazhi (Danur masya) is the month when the sun is at the final stages of the winter solstice. During this month (December and January) every year, Chennai celebrates music festival for six weeks every year, with hundreds of artists, young and old, showcasing their talents in hundreds of music concerts across the city. Music lovers converge to Chennai from different parts of India and abroad during this ‘music season’. Coinciding with this 86 year old traditional music festival, PreSense decided to feature one of the ancient musical instruments.

Flute is one of the oldest musical instruments known to mankind not only in India, but in several traditional cultures of the world like the native American, Indonesian, and Egyptian. It is believed to have evolved by the pre-historic man getting inspired, hearing the sweet sound of wind singing through the holes bored by the bees and bugs in the bamboo forest. Early man enjoyed this music of nature and tried to create his own music with a piece of bamboo by making suitable holes for blowing air to it by tuning the air flow with his finger to get the desired lilting music.

Different cultures over thousands of years have made their own variants of the flute. There have also been great flute players. Of these flutists, the greatest name that readily comes to mind is Lord Krishna, the Hindu mythological God, considered to be born more than 5000 years ago. In Brindavan, His flute mesmerised the cows, peacocks as well as the gopi ka s – the womenfolk. When played normally, the natural raga that comes from the flute is yamun; also known as kalyani when played in the north Indian style and hari kamboji when played in the south Indian style.

There are different types of flutes from the shorter South Indian Flute (kuzhal, or venu) to the long, bass Assamese Bamboo Flute and the reed flutes used in Bengal. In this land of cultural diversity, we still find all folk flute players performing their traditional tunes. Masters, vidwans and ustads, play the Ragas of the two great musical streams, viz. North Indian and South Indian Classical systems. The number of holes also varies in different geographical spheres.

The quality of the Indian flute music depends to some extent on the specific bamboo used to make it. It is commonly believed that the best bamboo that goes to make the Indian flutes grows in the Nagercoil area of South India.

Input courtesy: Flute Maestro Sri. Krishnamurthi Bhaskaran, You can also listen to his flute music in his site www.kbhaskaran.com and Sri D K Hari www.bharathgyan.com/

Article by Sukruti A Vadula, Editorial Team Member
Remembering Historic Events of the Month – December

Dissolution of mighty Soviet Union – December 1991

Soviet flag lowered for the last time

When the whole world was celebrating Christmas on 25 December 1991, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev resigned, declaring his office extinct, and handed over the Soviet nuclear missile launching codes to Russian President Boris Yeltsin. This marked the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), a massive communist empire that had existed since 1922.

That same evening at 7:32 P.M. the Soviet flag was lowered from the Kremlin for the last time and replaced with the Russian tricolor. The dissolution of the state also marked an end to the Cold War. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) formally ceased to exist on 26 December 1991. On this day, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was finalized by declaration no. 142-H of the Soviet of the Republics of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, acknowledging the independence of the twelve republics of the Soviet Union that created the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Mikhail Gorbachev

The USSR had been in a long economic stagnation when Gorbachev came to power in 1985. In order to bring about change, he introduced several reforms, including perestroika (economic restructuring) and glasnost (openness). Glasnost opened the floodgates of protest and many republics made moves toward independence, threatening the continued existence of the USSR.

On February 7, 1990, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) accepted the recommendation of Mikhail Gorbachev that the party give up its 70-year-long monopoly of political power.

During 1990 all fifteen constituent republics of the USSR held their first competitive elections. Reformers and ethnic nationalists won many of the seats. The CPSU lost the elections in six republics.

In August 1991, a group of Communist Party hardliners frustrated by the separatist movement attempted to stage a coup, which failed due to a massive show of civil resistance. This attempt destabilized the Government further.
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

Representatives from 11 Soviet republics (Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) met in the Kazakh city of Alma-Ata and announced that they would no longer be part of the Soviet Union. Instead, they declared they would establish a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The three Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) had already declared their independence from the USSR. Georgia, joined CIS in 1993 and withdrew in 2008.


Causes of Soviet Collapse

Stagnating economy, unwanted army involvement in Afghanistan, economic reforms Perestroika, decentralization with more autonomy to republics, transparency and openness (Glasnost), cover up of nuclear power plant accident at Chernobyl, growing nationalism in the individual republics due to the political blunders of the Communist leaders, lack of economic incentives to encourage innovation and productivity, excessive focus on military power due to keeping pace with massive US military build-up, reduced motivation and fear against the American threat, Importance given to Russia over other states were the major causes for Soviet disintegration.
Right to Information Act in India

What does information mean?

Information means any material in any form including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force[S.2(f)].

What does Right to Information mean?

It includes the right to -

- Inspect works, documents, records.
- take notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records.
- take certified samples of material.
- obtain information in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts.[S.2(j)]

What is the Application Procedure for requesting information?

- Apply in writing or through electronic means in English or Hindi or in the official language of the area, to the PIO, specifying the particulars of the information sought
- Reason for seeking information not required to be given;
- Pay fees as may be prescribed (if not belonging to the below poverty line category).
- Some categories of documents are exempted under this Act – not open for disclosure
- Certain departments like Intelligence Bureau, Defence, etc. are excluded from the purview

What is the time limit to get the information?

- 30 days from the date of application
- 48 hours for information concerning the life and liberty of a person
- 5 days shall be added to the above response time, in case the application for information is given to Assistant Public Information Officer.
- If the interests of a third party are involved then time limit will be 40 days (maximum period + time given to the party to make representation).
- Failure to provide information within the specified period is a deemed refusal.

For more details about Indian RTI Act visit
Never Mess with Common Man...

It is not enough.. form a political party..

It is not enough.. win the elections..

It is not enough.. form a government..

It is not enough.. fulfill your promises

Common Man is PRINCE...
Controversy

Who has shamed India?

Devyani Khobragade or US authorities

Submission of false documents (Visa fraud)

Like hazy Delhi winter, Delhi’s political atmosphere is also highly hazy, which could not be understood even by experienced political pundits.

Devyani row is highly mysterious. Devyani, a bureaucrat and a diplomat engages a servant maid with a formal contract agreeing to pay US $9.25 per hour with 40 hours of working per week. This agreement is filed with US Authorities to get A3 Visa. Simultaneously another dubious agreement is made without the knowledge of US Visa authorities with the servant maid to pay less. Both Devyani and her father Uttam Khobargade (retired IAS Officer) are alleged to be involved in Adarsh scam at Mumbai. They are also reported to be close to one of the powerful Indian Ministers.

Diplomatic immunity and engaging servants by Indian diplomats

I understand from some of the senior bureaucrats that Indian Government reimburses the servant expenses abroad for Indian diplomats, against self declaration. While some officers make only genuine claims, many others get the reimbursement even without engaging servants. If this is true, it is a matter of serious concern.

India is always very generous in granting full diplomatic immunity to all foreign diplomats, without expecting reciprocity. Actually, Devyani was not granted full diplomatic immunity by the US Government, since she was only at a junior level.
Though capitalist country, US respects labour laws

One of the retired top Indian bureaucrats, who has travelled all the countries told me that though US was a capitalist country, they cared more for labour laws and rights of the employees. He also quoted the recent penalty levied to the extent of $35 billion on Infosys for violation of labour laws. Even earlier, India has faced two or three times such Visa violation cases involving Indian diplomats.

I also found out from the US Government official site that they prescribe minimum wages for every profession. In India, the ‘babus’ are considered as ‘super citizens’ and they are entitled to violate all norms and rules of the Government. Many of the other democracies like US, Australia, European countries are not like this and follow the rules uniformly.

In US, if a diplomat is accused of any crime, they subject them to hand cuffing and stripping. IMF chief Kahn, who was a candidate for President of France was handcuffed, strip searched and imprisoned. Devyani, being a junior Indian consular official did not have full diplomatic immunity.

How servant maid was handled by Indian Government?

In US, the servant maid Sangeetha was paid lower wage than agreed by Devyani and was extracted work beyond 40 hours a week, stipulated under law. When she made a complaint to the authorities, after verification of all documents, Devyani was arrested and released on bail.

Even before the arrest, sensing trouble, the bureaucratic lobby in Delhi foisted cases against the servant maid Sangeetha, withdrew her passport and obtained arrest warrant. Unlike Indian laws, where victim is allowed to undergo agony, American laws provide extraordinary support to the victims. Before the arrest of Devyani, US Government issued a special visa to the family members of Sangeetha and took them to US. Bureaucratic lobby started accusing Sangeetha as an American spy.

Is knee-jerk reaction of India justified?

No doubt, US Government behaves like a ‘dada’ and manipulates politics in many countries, including India. It is a fact that US does not reciprocate the same type of protocol and courtesy to other countries, who treat the US diplomats with highest level of dignity. It is for the Indian Government to negotiate with US Government to get a better deal. There were many occasions when India was humiliated by US authorities. Even an iconic personality like former President of India Dr Abdul Kalam was treated shabbily by US authorities in Indian soil (Delhi Airport). When the whole nation got angry, Indian Government treated the issue through diplomatic channel softly.

Now the question arises, as to why India should show knee-jerk reaction, when Devyani was arrested for her own offences committed in US soil. Even assuming, that Devyani
enjoys the diplomatic immunity, do they have authority to exploit the poor servant maid in
the name of immunity?

Who shamed India?

This incident exposes the hollowness of Indian diplomacy and the arrogance with which our
Indian ‘babus’ function not only in India but also abroad. Even the journalists covering the
diplomacy are unable to understand the ‘mystery’ behind the Indian Government’s reaction.

Indian Government has very cleverly diverted the ‘exploitation of labour’ issue to ‘patriotic’ issue as if US has
shamed India. The rating hungry, emotional media has started running shows continuously, ignoring the offence
committed by the diplomat Devyani and her family. In the
process, everybody has ignored the involvement of
Khobragade family in Mumbai Adarsh scam also.

Comparing Devyani row with fishermen issue

Every day, the tiny nation Sri Lanka arrests hundreds of
Indian Fishermen in the Southern sea and thousands of
fishermen were killed in the past by Sri Lankan Navy. Indian Government is not able to open up even diplomatic
channel discussions against the atrocities committed blatantly by Sri Lankan Navy within
Indian borders. Unfortunately, these poor fishermen were not born in the family of
Kobhargades or any of the Indian ‘babus’.

A question arises whether US has shamed India by arresting an Indian diplomat. Instead, I
feel, Devyani Khobragade has shamed India by false declaration and not following the rules
of the country where she was assigned to work. Instead of straining the relationship
between US and India for the sake of ‘scam tainted’ bureaucratic family, the Government
should appoint an independent enquiry commission to look into this issue deeply.

This episode appears to be not an ordinary diplomatic spat. There seems to be something
more than what meets the eye. Please see once again the picture under the title of this
article.

By K. Srinivasan, Editor in Chief, PreSense
**Ignited Minds**

**No candle - no noise - no media hype: ADR continues to be a nightmare to Indian politicians**

Recently two major decisions generated media debate and shock wave among the Indian politicians. The first one is the order of the Central Information Commission (CIC) bringing 6 national political parties under the RTI ambit.

The second one is the setting aside of the section 8(4) of the Representation of People Act, 1951 by the Supreme Court of India. This judgement barred the sitting MPs and MLAs from holding office on being convicted in a Court of Law. When the Government wanted to bring an amendment in the Parliament to reverse this decision, they could not do so, due to public pressure. Three MPs, Lalu Prasad Yadav, Rasheed Masood and Jagdish Sharma lost their memberships in the Parliament.

Many people may not know that Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) was behind this great landmark decisions. They do not make noise; they do not create hype in the media about themselves. Even their pictures cannot be found in the net.

**Formation of ADR and activities**

A group of academicians from IIM, Ahmedabad, including Prof. Trilochan Sastry and Prof. Jagdeep S. Chhokar started worrying about the increasing criminalization of politics in 1999. They wanted to take the available democratic route silently. They came up with the idea of filing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL). Their lawyers suggested that having an association as a petitioner would be easier for the PIL. Thus Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) was formed in 1999 with an unanimous decision to file a PIL requesting the disclosure of background of contesting candidates.

ADR was formed by 11 socially conscious people. Of these 11 founders, 8 were professors of IIM, Ahmedabad. Because of the PIL filed by ADR, the Supreme Court in 2002, and subsequently in 2003, made it mandatory for all candidates contesting elections to disclose criminal, financial and educational background prior to the polls by filing an affidavit with the Election Commission.

With this first success, ADR started its journey to improve the politics and strengthen the democracy. From 2002, ADR started compiling information on the background of candidates contesting in Assembly and Parliamentary elections initially and later in few
Municipal elections too. They publish their consolidated and analysed review on the financial, criminal and educational background of the candidates in their site www.myneta.info and www.adrindia.org.

National Election Watch (NEW)

For the purpose of compiling information on the background details of candidates from their affidavits and also to spread the word about the available information through NGOs who have grass-root presence, ADR has established National Election Watch (NEW) in 28 states, headed by state coordinators. Around 1200 NGOs have volunteered to work with ADR to improve the transparency and accountability in the political system.

Recently, they were given Indian of the year Award for public service by CNN-IBN. In an exclusive interview with PreSense, Prof. Jagdeep S. Chhokar (Former Director-in-charge of IIM, Ahmedabad), Co-Founder and Trustee of ADR says that they are looking to tie-up with more NGOs during the General Elections 2014 to bring forth more transparency in politics.

Mera Vote; Mera Desh Campaign for General Elections 2014

Many individuals and Foundations are supporting ADR for this cause financially. Prof Chhokar further adds, “On 15th October 2013, we have launched a campaign called ‘Mera Vote Mera Desh’ (My Vote My Country). Our strategy for the Lok Sabha elections is to try and reach out to a larger section of the population and educate them about the value of their votes and why they should not be selling their votes. This initiative aims at controlling the money power of the political class apart from letting the people know how to access information available about the contesting candidates from our website through various means. As part of the campaign, we have tied up with many national and regional media. We will also be using the social media extensively. We want the younger generation to take the message effectively to the voters. We will be running this campaign till the end of Lok Sabha Elections 2014”.

When asked about their future plans, Prof Chhokar says that the Representation of People Act and the Indian Constitution do not have specific rules and regulations regarding functioning, finances and accountability of political parties. ADR with the guidance of Former Chief Justice of India Shri Venkatachalliah has drafted ‘Political parties draft bill’ to bring in more transparency. After the General Elections, we will take it forward aggressively”.

For more details, please visit their site www.adrindia.org Interested may contact them at adr@adrindia.org

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Please visit our political analysis at www.primepoint.in
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