

London to launch three-month India festival in July

Come July and London will turn into a mini India with a three-month festival that will showcase India's popular culture, arts and cuisine.

Dubbed 'India Now', the fest will comprise several events across London dedicated to Indian art, films, food, theatre, music and fashion.

Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, will launch the festival on July 15. The theme of the event is 'India and London — Partners in Globalisation', reported *Asians in*



Mayor of London Ken Livingstone

Media, an ethnic online magazine.

"India is not only one of the world's most important and rapidly growing economies, an emerging economic superpower, but it also has one of the world's most important cultures," Livingstone was quoted as saying.

"In 2007, we are aiming to strengthen London's relations with India, building on the significant contribution the Indian community — the largest minority national group in London — already makes to the economic, cultural and social success of

the capital," he said.

Later this year, Livingstone is expected to visit both New Delhi and Mumbai with a delegation of representatives from London businesses, with plans to open mayoral offices in both cities.

India definitely seems to be the flavour of the season in Britain. Earlier in June, the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) held a four-day gala event in Yorkshire, complete with Bollywood stars and their glitzy performances.



Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan, centre, delivering a talk on 'Independence of the Judiciary' at Lincoln's Inn, London.

Humanitarian award for Shilpa Shetty



Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty was presented with the Silver Star Award for her outstanding contribution to international humanitarian causes, particularly for increasing HIV/AIDS

awareness.

Leader of Britain's House of Commons Jack Straw presented the award to the 31-year old actress at a gala dinner held at the Durbar Court of Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) on June 16, as part of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of election of Keith Vaz, NRI leader, Labour MP and former minister for FCO.

In her brief acceptance speech, Shetty, the winner of the last *Celebrity Big Brother* show, said Vaz played an important role when she was racially abused by some of the contestants. "He screamed the loudest," she acknowledged. Lauding the work of Vaz both for the Asian community and the society as a whole, Straw, who was the guest of honour, said, "Keith has worked assiduously as an ambassador for New Britain. Keith represents everything that is good in our party."

Straw, campaign manager for Gordon Brown before he was elected leader of the Labour party to succeed PM Tony Blair, said Vaz, as a member of the campaign cell, played a key role in ensuring Brown's unanimous choice.

Indian projects among green energy award winners

Three Indian projects were among the winners of the 2007 Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy announced on June 21 at the Royal Geographical Society in London.

Saji Das from BIOTECH in Kerala was the first prize winner of the Food Security Award (£30,000) for developing and installing biogas plants in Kerala that use food waste which is often left out in the

streets to rot, to generate gas for cooking. Harish Hande from SELCO, based in Bangalore, wins the Outstanding Achievement Award (£15,000) awarded to a past winner whose work has accelerated since winning an award, for, in the words of the judges, "the way in which this visionary individual has demonstrated beyond doubt that it is possible to run a renewable energy business which is both a striking

commercial success, and which lifts people out of poverty, too".

Vidya Sagar from SKG Sangha in Karnataka takes second prize for the Food Security Award (£10,000) for improving the lives of rural communities in Karnataka by supplying them with both dung-based biogas plants for cooking and a specially designed unit that turns the slurry from the biogas plant into high quality.

Vodafone to invest \$2 billion in India this year

Having constituted a new Board to administer India's third largest mobile firm Hutch-Essar, Vodafone said it would invest \$2 billion in the country this year for expanding its business. "The meeting was excellent... we will invest two billion dollar this year in India," Vodafone CEO Arun Sarin told reporters emerging from the first meeting of the new board in Mumbai.

The investment would be raised based on the progress, he said. The constitution of



Vodafone CEO Sarin September.

"This (integration) will be an ongoing process, but we hope to complete it by end of September," the India-born chief of the

the Board marks the beginning of integration of Vodafone and its Indian partner Essar, which Sarin hoped would be completed by

British mobile leader said.

The new board has 12 members — four from Essar and eight from Vodafone, including two independent directors.

On switching names, Sarin said no date has been decided for the brand change. "But it will happen. Next time you come here... you will see the Vodafone name."

He also said that the company was keen on creating a platform for infrastructure sharing, and welcomed industry players to join it.

■ Nehru Centre Events

Exhibition of images from Ladakh

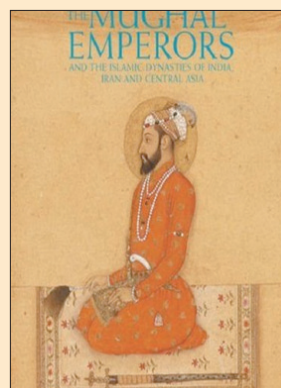


On June 19, Lord Navnit Dholakia was invited to inaugurate David Bartels' exhibition of photographs on Ladakh at The Nehru Centre. Ladakh is set deep in the Indian Himalayas on the western edge of the Tibetan Plateau and is one of the

highest and driest inhabited places on earth. The remote and spectacularly beautiful land has always fascinated travellers with its barren desert alongside lush green valleys, glaciers and sand dunes, monasteries and mosques and an intriguing blend of cultures.

Anglo-Indian artist David Bartels has been painting Ladakh's challenging landscape of glaciers, high passes, spectacular 'moonscape' and multi-coloured rock formations. David's water colours and oil paintings is an international touring exhibition about Ladakh to create awareness among a wider audience. David's trip to India has been funded by the Indian Tourism Office, London.

Book on the Mughal rule in India



Emperors and the Islamic Dynasties of Persia, India and Central Asia, which is a detailed history of the long line of Mughal rulers from 1206 to 1925, illustrated with

On June 20, The Nehru Centre invited F.C.R. Robinson, Professor of History of South Asia at the University of London, to deliver a lecture on his book *Mughal* exquisite paintings, manuscripts, and architecture. In a series of lively biographical essays, this book forms a reign-by-reign record of the sultans, shahs, emperors and khans who all shared the Muslim Persian high civilisation which flourished from Iran and Central Asia, through Afghanistan to India, from the 13th to the 20th century. This is the first book to bring together these important dynasties into one sweeping narrative, and will be an essential aid to an understanding of Islam in today's world.

Prof. Robinson has also been Visiting Professor at the University of Washington, as well as President of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.