

NAVANETHEM PILLAY CONFIRMED AS NEW HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

- The United Nations General Assembly has confirmed the appointment of Navanethem (Navi) Pillay, of South Africa, to succeed Louise Arbour as High Commissioner for Human Rights -- the leading UN human rights official. At a special meeting in New York on 28 July 2008, the Secretary-General's nominee was confirmed by consensus. Ms. Pillay's four-year term will start on 1 September 2008.
- As a member of a non-white minority in apartheid South Africa, and as a front-line, grassroots lawyer who acted as a defense attorney for many anti-apartheid campaigners and trades unionists, Ms. Pillay has direct personal experience of many of the issues that a High Commissioner for Human Rights covers under her mandate. She has also been very active in supporting women's rights, and was one of the co-founders of the international NGO Equality Now, which campaigns for women's rights. She has also been involved with a number of other organizations working on issues relating to children, detainees, victims of torture, and of domestic violence as well as a range of other economic, social and cultural rights.

BALDEV RAJ

- Baldev Raj, Director, Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR), Kalpakkam, has been elected vice-president of International Institute of Welding (IIW) for the period from 2009 to 2012 by its Board of Directors. The decision was made during the IIW's annual assembly held in Singapore in July.
- Dr. Raj was the first Indian to be elected to the Board of Directors of the IIW three years ago, and he has now been elected vice-president.
- The IIW is the authoritative body on standards, practices, documents, and human resource relating to welding science and technology. Conceived in 1947 and founded in 1948 by 13 countries, the IIW is today the largest worldwide network for welding and joining technologies.

SOTOMAYOR SAGA

Sonia Maria Sotomayor is a great Judge, Sworn in a Justice of the United States Supreme Court on August 8, she is the 111th Justice of that court, and only the third woman to hold the post.

SUNITA NARAIN

Environment activist and Director of Centre for Science and Environment Sunita Narain has been chosen for the 2009 Raja-Lakshmi award instituted by the Sri Raja Lakshmi Foundation, Chennai. The annual award to promote arts, literature, science, humanities and other intellectual pursuits, carries a prize of Rs. 1 lakh and a citation.

MIRZA ASADULLAH KHAN GHALIB

Mirza Asadullah Baig Khan (27 December 1797 — 15 February 1869), was a great classical Urdu and Persian poet from India during British colonial rule. During his lifetime the Mughals were eclipsed and displaced by the British and finally deposed following the defeat of the Indian rebellion of 1857, events that he wrote of. Most notably, he wrote several ghazals during his life, which have since been interpreted and sung in many different ways by different people. He is considered, in the South Asia, to be the most popular and influential poet of the Urdu language. Ghalib today remains popular amongst Urdu speakers not only in India and Pakistan but also amongst diaspora communities around the world. He led a revolution in Urdu poetry with his words.

TASLIMA NASRIN

- Taslima Nasrin (born 25 August, 1962, in Mymensingh, Bangladesh) is a Bengali Bangladeshi ex-doctor turned author who has been living in exile since 1994. From a modest literary profile in the late 1980s, she rose to global fame by the end of the twentieth century owing to her radical feminist views and her criticism of Islam in particular and of religion in general.
- Since fleeing Bangladesh in 1994 she has lived in many countries, and currently (2009) lives in New York after expulsion from India in 2008 where she was denounced by the Muslim clergy and received death threats from Islamic fundamentalists. She works to build support for secular humanism, freedom of thought, equality for women, and human rights by publishing, lecturing, and campaigning.
- Her breakthrough novel *Lajja (Shame)* was published in 1993, and attracted wide attention because of its controversial subject matter. In six months' time, it sold 50,000 copies in Bangladesh before being banned.
- Recently the Indian government extended the visa of controversial Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin for six months till February 16 next year.

ASHOK CHAKRA FOR MOHIT SHARMA, SREERAM KUMAR

Major Mohit Sharma from 1 Para (Special Forces), killed in a battle with terrorists in the Hafruda forest in Jammu and Kashmir this March, has been honoured with Ashok Chakra, the country's highest peace time gallantry award on the occasion of Independence Day. Major Mohit Sharma was born in Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh and was commissioned into 90 Medium Regiment (Artillery) in March 2004. His family is now settled in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.

Major D. Sreeram Kumar (Madurai Tamil Nadu), who killed 12 terrorists in counter-insurgency operations in the northeast, will also be honoured with Ashok Chakra. Major Sreeram Kumar is serving with 30 Assam Rifles, to which he was deputed in March 2007 in Arunachal Pradesh during '**Operation Orchid**'. He receives the medal for creating an effective and vibrant intelligence network, delivering hard blows to activities of terrorists and making it difficult for them to operate in his area of responsibility during '**Operation Hifazat**' in Manipur.

BUTA SINGH

- Buta Singh (born on 21st March 1934) is a presently Chairman of National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC).
- He has been elected as a member of Lok Sabha, eight times. He is former Union Home Minister under Rajiv Gandhi's Government & more recently governor of Bihar state, India. He was the home minister of India during the early 1990s.
- He has written a book "Punjabi Speaking State - A Critical Analysis" and a collection of articles on Punjabi Literature and Sikh History.

SATYANARAYAN GANGARAM PITRODA

- Satyanarayan Gangaram Pitroda, better known as Dr Sam Pitroda (born 16 November 1942) is an inventor, entrepreneur and policymaker. Currently chairman of India's National Knowledge Commission, he is also widely considered to have been responsible for India's communications revolution.
- He is the Chairman of World-Tel Limited, an International Telecommunication Union (ITU) initiative. He also heads National Information Highway Authority- a Government of India initiative to synergize its various e-activities.
- In 1984, Mr. Pitroda was invited to return to India by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. On his return, he started the Center for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), an autonomous telecom R&D organization. In 1987, he became advisor to Mrs. Gandhi's

successor, Rajiv Gandhi and was responsible for shaping India's foreign and domestic telecommunications policies. He is largely considered responsible for the telecommunications revolution in India and specifically, the ubiquitous, yellow-signed Public Call Offices (PCO) that quickly brought cheap and easy domestic and international public telephones all over the country.

V. K. SARASWAT

- V.K. Saraswat, the newly appointed Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister and Director-General, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
 - An eminent missile scientist, Dr. Saraswat, a Ph.D. in Combustion Engineering, spearheaded the development of the country's strategic and tactical missile systems, including the '**Agni**' series of strategic missiles that cover a range up to 3,000 km.
 - He was also the project director of the **first indigenous surface-to-surface missile Prithvi**.
 - As Programme Director Air Defence, he pioneered the concept of theatre defence systems and integration of national air defence elements. He also spearheaded India's Ballistic Missile Defence programme by demonstrating the capabilities of the indigenously developed anti-missile shield to intercept incoming ballistic missiles in both exo and endo-atmospheric regions. Dr. Saraswat played a key role in developing a number of critical technologies which were denied to India due to the Missile Technology Control Regime.
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JEAN DREZE

Jean Dreze is an Indian development economist and a former member of the National Developmental Council. He is a member of the support group of the Right to Food campaign, an informal network of organisations and individuals committed to the realisation of the right to food in India.

A.Q. KHAN

Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan is a Pakistani nuclear scientist and metallurgical engineer, widely regarded as the founder of Pakistan's nuclear program.

PANAKKAD SYED MOHAMMEDALI SHIHAB THANGAL

Panakkad Syed Mohammedali Shihab Thangal was a politician and an Islamic scholar from the Kerala. He was the President of the Kerala state committee of the Indian Union Muslim League. Shihab Thangal was a member of the Thangal family which is believed to be descendents of the Prophet Mohammed. Kerala's most prominent symbol of secularism, peace and communal amity, passed away .

CORAZON AQUINO

- The former Philippines President stood for “people power”
 - corazon aquino, the rallying figure of the “people power revolution” in the Philippines in 1986, is remembered as a national icon of democracy. Her death in Manila on August 1, at the age of 76, has once again brought that “revolution” under the scanner of contemporary history. In renewed focus now, as a result, are the continuing “failings” of democracy in the Philippines. More importantly, the larger agenda of “democratisation” across East Asia is also acquiring a new sense of urgency.
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EDWARD MOORE "TED" KENNEDY (FEBRUARY 22, 1932 – AUGUST 25, 2009)

- He was a United States Senator from Massachusetts and a member of the **Democratic Party**. First elected in November 1962, he was elected nine times and served for 46 years in the U.S. Senate. who will be remembered as one of the most effective lawmakers in the history of the Senate
 - At the time of his death, he was the second most senior member of the Senate, and the third-longest-serving senator in U.S. history. For many years the most prominent living member of the Kennedy family, he was the son of Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr., the youngest brother of President John F. Kennedy and Senator Robert F. Kennedy, both victims of assassinations, and the father of Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy.
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