

### **Su. Venkatesan wins Sahitya Akademi award**

Tamil writer Su. Venkatesan, who captured 600 years of history of Madurai between 1310 and 1920 in his debut novel Kaaval Kottam, has won the Sahitya Akademi award for the year 2011. The 1048-page novel begins with the pillage of Madurai, known as Koodal Maanagar by Allauddin Khilji's general Malik Kafur, and the killing of Karuppu, a security guard. Subsequently, it fell into the hands of Vijayanagar kings and the descendants of Karuppu returned to Madurai as security guards, offering a unique security system till the British took over. All these have been dealt with in a gripping narrative. Tamil film Aravaan, by director Vasantha Balan, is based on one of the sub-plots of the novel.

### **Guha wins it for narrative history**

Novelist Gopalakrishna Pai (Kannada) and eminent historian Ramachandra Guha (English) are among those who have won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi award this year. Eight books of poetry, seven novels, three essays, one each of narrative history, biography, play and short stories won the award this year. Recommended by jury members representing 23 Indian languages, the awards were approved by the Executive Board of the Akademi which met in the capital on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Akademi president Sunil Gangopadhyay. Poets honoured with the award are: (late) Kabin Phukan (Assamese), Manindra Gupta (Bengali), Premananda Mosahari (Bodo), Naseem Shafaie (Kashmiri), Melvyn Rodrigues (Konkani), Harekrishna Satapathy (Sanskrit), Aditya Kumar Mandi (Santali) and Khaleel Mamoon (Urdu). Other novelists who won the award are: Kashinath Singh (Hindi), Kshetri Bira (Manipuri), Kalpanakumari Devi (Odia), Baldev Singh (Punjabi) and Atul Kanakk (Rajasthani). Lalit Magotra (Dogri), Grace (Marathi) and Samala Sadasiva (Telugu) received the award for their books on essays. Mr. Guha for his narrative history, Mohan Parmar (Gujarati) for his short stories, M.K. Sanu (Malayalam) for his biography and Mohan Gehani (Sindhi) for his book on plays have been honoured.

### **A rare gift from Iran for Aligarh**

A 1,000-year-old manuscript, "Nahjul Balagha", said to be a collection of letters, speeches and aphorisms of the fourth Caliphate of Islam Hazrat Ali, was released for publication at Aligarh Muslim University on Wednesday by Iran's former Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Wilayati. The Urdu, Hindi and English versions of this rare manuscript will be published by the AMU with financial support of the Iran Government. Another book, "Bahr-e-Zakhkhar", said to contain a rare collection of Tazkira (a sort of biography mostly in the form of poetry) in Persian was also released. AMU's Maulana Azad Library was also gifted 3,000 Persian manuscripts and CDs by the Iran Cultural House.

### **P.K. Iyengar passes away**

The former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), P.K. Iyengar, 80, who passed away in Mumbai on December 21, was a great scientist and a role model to many people, according to AEC Chairman Srikumar Banerjee. He excited the minds of youngsters in several fields. Dr. Iyengar was Chairman, AEC, and Secretary, Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) from 1990-93. He was Director, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), from 1984 to 1990. Prior to this, he headed the Physics group in BARC. Dr. Iyengar played a leading role in India's first Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) in May 1974 at Pokhran in Rajasthan. He was trained in Canada under Dr. B.N. Brockhouse, a Nobel Laureate in Physics.

### **Sahitya Akademi award for Sadasiva**

It was only logical for Samala Sadasiva, the literary giant from Adilabad in Andhra Pradesh, to win the Kendra Sahitya Akademi award for his work in Telugu literature. His book, 'Swaralayalu' (2008), on Hindustani classical music, was selected for the award announced. The 84-year old retired teacher began his literary career at a young age of 20. Being well versed in Sanskrit, Urdu, Persian, Marathi, English, Hindi and Telugu, he produced many creative works during his long literary career.

### **Bharati Vidyapeeth gets A grade**

Bharati Vidyapeeth University, established in 1996 under the UGC Act, has been re-accredited with Grade "A" by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council. The university has 29 constituent units under its umbrella with disciplines such as management, medicine, law, engineering, science, arts, commerce, pharmacy, architecture and social science.

Meanwhile, the Bharati Vidyapeeth University Institute of Management and Research is organising its annual alumni meet, "Milap" on December 24.

### **Delhi High Court halts deportation of 151 Pakistan nationals**

The Delhi High Court has directed the Union Government not to deport 151 Pakistan nationals whose entry visas had expired. They had come to India in September in two batches on pilgrimage. The Bench passed the orders on a public interest litigation by an office-bearer of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha seeking a direction to the government to either give asylum or citizenship to the foreign nationals. The petitioner, Rakesh Ranjan, submitted that these Pakistan nationals belonging to the Hindu community were not ready to return to their nation as they felt that their lives were not secure in that country.

### **U.S. could remain in Afghanistan beyond 2014: General**

The senior U.S. commander in Afghanistan has suggested U.S. forces could remain in the country beyond 2014 despite President Barack Obama's pledge to withdraw them by then. The commander's remarks amounted to the most emphatic signal to date that the U.S. military intended to secure a presence, possibly for years. General John R. Allen, avoided talking about troop levels as the United States begins to wind down its operations in the war on the Taliban militancy, now 10 years old. His proposal for Afghanistan, if followed, might help avoid the outcome of the United States' other war, in Iraq, where the political instability worsened almost immediately after the last U.S. troops departed. The General also laid out his vision for U.S. and NATO troops for the next few years. He expects more military trainers and mentors to come into Afghanistan to work with Afghan troops starting in 2012. Currently, most Afghan units are partners with NATO forces, and in a number of places the NATO troops still have a dominant role.

### **CSTO tightens foreign base norms**

Russia has won the right to veto the establishment of new foreign military bases in the member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). At their summit in Moscow the leaders of the CSTO agreed that the deployment of foreign bases in their territory is only possible with the approval of all partners of the defence alliance. Kazakhstan took over the rotating presidency of the CSTO from Belarus. The defence bloc of former Soviet states also includes Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev emphasised that the decision had been endorsed unanimously by all the seven member states. The tightening of rules for opening extra-regional military bases apparently does not apply to existing facilities, such as the U.S. transit centre in Kyrgyzstan, a German air transit facility in Uzbekistan and French military aircraft based in Tajikistan.

### **McLeod Russel eyes more buys in Rwanda**

McLeod Russel India Ltd (MRIL) is keen to make further acquisitions in Rwanda where it already has a presence. MRIL, which had bought into a government-owned tea outfit in the African country in 2010, has so far had a good experience, according to sources. Following a privatisation drive in Rwanda, the government had divested 60 per cent of its stake in this estate while retaining 30 per cent. The remaining 10 per cent has been given to a workers' cooperative. At present, two more tea estates — Mulundi and Saggasa have been put on the block for which bids have been invited by the government. MRIL may bid for these two estates after getting a nod from its board.

### **Ranbaxy in peace pact with USFDA**

Ranbaxy Laboratories has announced that it had signed a consent decree with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) to lift a ban on import of drugs from certain manufacturing plants in India. The immediate fallout of the move will be \$500 million payout. In a related development, Daiichi Sankyo Company and Ranbaxy Laboratories announced a synergistic initiative in Malaysia where Ranbaxy will market innovative products originally discovered by Daiichi Sankyo. Following Singapore, this is the companies' second marketing synergy in the ASEAN region.

### **SCI JV among 10 Iranian cos under U.S. sanction**

The U.S. has slapped sanctions against ten companies linked to the Iranian shipping industry; with many of them linked to Irano Hind, a joint venture with India's premier public sector undertaking Shipping Corporation of India (SCI). The action was being taken as Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) and its subsidiaries have increasingly relied upon multiple front companies and agents to overcome the impact of U.S. The Chief Executive and Managing Director of Irano Hind, Jamshid Khalili, who is an Iranian national has also been slapped with sanctions.

### **Auto Expo to see 50 launches**

Two years after witnessing the unveiling of the world's cheapest car, Tata Nano, the 11<sup>th</sup> Auto Expo 2012 in New Delhi will see at least 50 major launches from world's leading carmakers. Starting January 7, 2012, the five-day event will see participation of around 1,500 companies automakers and auto ancillary firms from 24 countries that will showcase their new products and emerging technologies. Auto Expo 2012 Steering Committee Chairman Rajive Kaul said. Having bagged the status of the world's second largest auto show globally after the Shanghai expo in terms of visitors' attendance, the highlights of the biennial event this time would be the unveiling of 24 cars by domestic companies and eight by global automobile giants, besides eight two-wheelers.

### **New Pajero launch unlikely in auto show**

The new Mitsubishi Pajero launch will be delayed and is now set to miss the January 2012 Auto Expo. Manoj Jha, Managing Director of Hindustan Motors said. The rescheduled launch of Pajero and other vehicles will start from the first quarter of 2012. Indications were that the Pajero launch might happen around February, 2012. The Pajero SUV enjoys a good a market, especially in North India, and the new launches (of Pajero and Ambassador variants) are expected to help the company ramp up its volume. Pajero is HM's best-selling vehicle and is produced at its Tiruvallur plant in Tamil Nadu through a technical collaboration with Mitsubishi Motors.

### **Chairman Ravi Ruia quits Essar Energy**

Essar Energy Chairman Ravi Ruia has announced his decision to step down from the post amid CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) claiming that the Essar group suppressed facts related to its equity holding in Loop Telecom, an allegation denied by the conglomerate.

### **Oswal GreenTech buys stake in NDTV**

Oswal GreenTech, a Delhi-based chemicals and fertilizers company, has acquired 14.17 per cent stake in television broadcasting major NDTV Ltd for about Rs.24 crore through open market transactions. Through bulk deal transactions on the National Stock Exchange, Oswal Greentech purchased a total of 91.36 lakh shares of NDTV at Rs.26.64 a piece, thus acquiring a 14.17 per cent stake in the media company. According to stock exchange data, NDTV shares were sold by Merrill Lynch Capital Markets and Nomura Mauritius in two separate bulk deals.

### **Hyderabad to host World junior meet**

Hyderabad will host the World junior table tennis championships for boys and girls under-19 years of age in November 2013. S.M. Sultan, Vice President, Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) told that the decision was taken at the recent National-ranking (South Zone) tournament. Present at the decision-making meeting were Dhan Raj Choudhary, Secretary-General, TTFI, Bhaskar Ram, President, APTTA and Sultan, also Secretary of the host body. After India had been allotted the event by the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF), the TTFI had initially opted for New Delhi as the venue.

### **Mudgal Commission to submit report by January end**

The one-man Commission of Mukul Mudgal, former Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Courts, appointed to probe into issues relating to the prevalence of doping in the country, will submit its final report to the Union Government by January end next year. Mr. Mudgal said that he hoped to submit a comprehensive report on how best the menace of doping and drug abuse could be eradicated from the Indian sports.