

Congress to Form Alternative Government?

Pallab Bhattacharya writes from New Delhi

A sizable section of Congressmen and the Left parties feel that it would be politically unwise to topple the BJP government at present because it might help BJP get away with a martyr image.

As relations between ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and its ally AIADMK come under increasing pressure fuelling speculations about the future of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government, main opposition Congress has been sending stronger and clearer signals that it will form an alternative government if Vajpayee ministry falls.

The idea of a Congress-led government received a major boost with CPI (M) announcing issue-based support to it becoming the first Left Party to do so.

The announcement was made by none other than West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu who also indicated the extent to which the Marxists are willing to shed their anti-Congressism.

Basu made it clear that CPI (M), the second largest opposition party in Lok Sabha after Congress, would inform the President K R Narayanan that it would not vote against a Congress-led government seeking trust vote.

The Marxist announcement came after informal talks between CPI (M) and Congress leaders during the last three weeks, including a meeting between Basu and former finance minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms and liberalisation.

The veteran CPI (M) leader's remarks assumed significance as they came a day after Congress President Sonia Gandhi declared that her party would not support any other party or political combine to form an alternative government in the event of collapse of the BJP-led ministry.

Mrs Gandhi's assertion, according to political analysts here, is a clear signal that it is only Congress which will head the government and would not like a repeat of the 18-month saga of United Front rule which was propped up by Congress support from outside.

The CPI (M) extending issue-based outside support to Congress is nothing surprising when one recalls that such a proposal was toyed with by action of the party soon after the previous general elections produced a hung parliament.

It is a different story that CPI (M) finally gave up the idea largely due to opposition from a section of United Front especially TDP and the Marxist party's allies RSP and Forward Bloc. The CPI (M) obviously did not want to be seen as a wrecked of Front unity.

But TDP having quit the Front accusing some of its constituents of being pro-Congress, the CPI (M) did not take long to decide which way it would go.

It remains to be seen if CPI (M) is able to take along with other partners of the Left Front CPI, RSP and Forward Bloc. Interestingly, CPI, RSP and Forward Bloc differed with CPI (M) on the perception that the BJP-led government was going to fall soon.

While Senior CPI leader Indrajit Gupta has indicated his party might, even if grudgingly, go along with CPI (M) decision, RSP and Forward Bloc have expressed serious reservations about Congress' economic policies, its frequent "compromise" with communal forces and "high-level corruption."

But what Basu's announcement might have done is to force the other constituents of the Left Front to take a stand on a proposed Congress-led government as it was not on their agenda right now, political observers say.

The fact remains that Jyoti Basu's statement is in keeping with the moves in CPI (M) and CPI to review their stand on Congress since the emergence of BJP as the contender for power.

CPI (M) and CPI in their respective party Congress three

years ago identified BJP and Congress as "twin enemies" and advocated a policy of 'equi-distance' from both. But winds of rethinking in CPI (M) and CPI began blowing afresh since the choice was between Congress and BJP.

Of late, the two left parties have given enough indications that they would not be averse to supporting a Congress-led government if the latter made changes in its economic policies to prepare the groundwork for support.

The Congress is divided on the issue of taking CPI (M) support although the party officially welcomed Jyoti Basu's statement. A section within the Congress argues that a Congress-led government would be vulnerable to "pinpricks" from Left parties which would try to dictate the economic policies and appointment of senior government officials and diplomats.

Therefore, it is important that the Left's support is obtained on specific terms before Congress puts together a coalition, it says.

The West Bengal state unit of Congress has firmly opposed the party forming government at the centre with CPI (M) sup-

port because it would lead to further erosion of the party whose main political plank has been to oppose CPI (M).

West Bengal Congress leadership feels that the party suffered seriously in the state after it extended support to United Front which included CPI (M), after 1996 elections. This, they point out, was evident from results of parliamentary and Panchayat polls and some recent assembly by-elections this year which relegated Congress to the third position and saw Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress emerging as the main opposition.

In such a situation, taking CPI (M) support to form government would further strengthen Trinamool Congress' claim as the only viable alternative to Left Front, the Congress leadership feels.

But right now neither Congress nor the Left parties are in a hurry to precipitate the fall of Vajpayee government.

Quite the contrary. Caution is the buzz word in Congress camp. For, not much has happened to make Congress change its assessment made after the results of general elections in February-March that the party has been mandated to sit in the opposition.

A sizable section of Congressmen and the Left parties feel that it would be politically unwise to topple the BJP government at present because it might help BJP get away with a martyr image.

Rather, BJP should be allowed to rule, make errors, suffer erosion of popular support and buckle under pulls and pressure of its coalition partner, they say.

The opposition is now planning to try and corner the government which faces the task of getting the Finance Bill and National Budget passed in parliament, opposition sources say.

Meanwhile, BJP seems to be in no mood to appease its ally AIADMK on its demand for dismissal of DMK government in Tamil Nadu and hopes Jayalalita's party would not withdraw crucial support to Vajpayee government.

Jayalalita, sulking for her demand remaining unfulfilled, not only stepped up the attack on BJP, including a strong criticism of Home Minister L K Advani, but stayed away from a meeting of ruling coalition parties on June 27 ostensibly for health reasons.

The BJP is likely to send its senior leader Jaswant Singh on a troubleshooting mission to Chennai (Madras) to meet Jayalalita. However, no date has yet been fixed for that.



Jyoti Basu: The crucial support

Freedom from Humbug

by B G Verghese

Consider the incongruity and arrogance of power explicit in the CTBT which cannot enter into force unless India, its staunchest opponent, ratifies it. Having tested before the treaty closed in, India has been right to declare no first use.

President Truman proclaimed his celebrated Four Freedoms in 1948. To those, Bob Hope added a fifth: freedom from humbug. The adage comes to mind in the context of the current debate on India's nuclear test explosions.

The Indian bomb is no more abhorrent than the American, Chinese, Russian, French or British. Nor is the ninth state argument particularly impressive when the N-five are licensed to retain and refine their arsenals through sub-critical tests or by computer simulation and, like other adherents, have the right to rescind their accession to the CTBT if faced with the exigencies of sovereign defence. Indeed, this was an argument proffered by the United States and Britain before the International Court of Justice which had been asked for an advisory opinion by the UN General Assembly in 1996 on the legality of the use of nuclear weapons.

India has consistently advocated complete and universal nuclear disarmament as the best and only means of getting rid of this weapon of mass destruction, with arms limitation and control being intermediate stages along the way. It repeated this after its first test in 1974 — and waited. In the event, the NPT and now the CTBT have legitimised nuclear weapons and only sought to freeze a highly unequal and discriminatory status quo.

However, even the status quo seems a charade. Many among those who have decried the Indian tests either possess nuclear arms or enjoy the protection of a nuclear umbrella. NATO's nuclear umbrella has extended eastward to Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary despite the end of the cold war. Why? And this geographical proliferation could be but Stage I in a new ostpolitik.

The United States turned a blind eye to proliferation of nuclear capability, and the export of narcotics, Islamic fundamentalism and a new genera-

tion of automatic small arms to and through a frontline ally during all the years of the Afghanistan war, as the "evil empire" had to be defeated. The consequences of that blindness have been profoundly painful and disturbing for a country like India.

Nuclear weapons suffer degradation over time. Hence the United States has entered into a highly sophisticated Stockpile Stewardship and Management Programme to maintain the battlefield integrity of its nuclear weapons despite ageing. And consider the extraordinary incongruity and arrogance of power explicit in the CTBT which, it is decreed, cannot enter into force unless India, its staunchest opponent, ratifies it. So in not signing the treaty in September 1996 India was angrily dubbed a "spoiler" — the strange entry-into-force formula is a multilateral version of the extra-territoriality the US has assumed for domestic laws by proclaiming that third countries trading with states like Cuba, Iran and Libya, with which it has banned commerce, are liable to face sanctions. European nations are protesting this illegal imposition.

It is moot whether India is truly a "spoiler". Rather, the nuclear-missile regime that those that have along with their umbrelladallies have imposed seeks to prevent "proliferation" of so-called dual-use technology. Many technologies are directly of indirect dual use, much depending on the end-configuration. Most frontier technologies will probably be dual-use in this sense. India has already experienced embar-

gones on high-speed computers, cryogenic engines, a fertiliser/chemical technology that was suspect, etc. Much that is new and exciting in the chemical, bio-technological, metals and materials, electronics, space, information technology and other areas could be dual-use. By what and whose definition?

Dual-use, like beauty, lies in the beholder's eye. And the eye might well behold threats to national jobs, competitiveness, trade, whatever. And he who defies or demurs, faces sanctions. And the ultimate power behind the trade sanctions is military-nuclear sanctions. Indian trading vessels carrying "embargoed" cargo have been intercepted and the suspect merchandise quarantined. Where lies redress when the other party appeals to national interest, let alone national security? In a statement issued by the White House on August 11, 1995 Bill Clinton said: "I consider the maintenance of a safe and reliable nuclear stockpile to be a supreme national interest of the United States."

The dual-use regime could retard the technological growth and economic development of independent nations such as India. This is strangely a less articulated but most important reason to oppose technological colonialism. Other unequal social, economic and environmental conditionalities have sprouted and are proliferating. Yet, the message one hears is "if you are with me, it's all right."

Having tested before the CTBT closed in, India has been right to declare no first use and a moratorium on tests. It should logically modestly

weaponise — though not deploy — but be willing to negotiate amendments or additional protocols to the CTBT. NPT, FMCT, MTCR, et al. The two-fold objectives should be to secure measured commitments towards the goal of universal and complete disarmament, however long the road, and to correct the distortions that have crept into the world system on account of dual use, extra-territorial and similar discriminatory and arbitrary regimes.

Given reasonable movement in that direction, India too must march in step. The cost of weaponisation, to build a limited deterrent and no more, will not be very huge as both India's nuclear and space programmes have essentially been for peaceful purposes and the bulk of the investments are sunk costs. There must be no nuclear arms race.

Pakistan, like India, was a covert nuclear power. Growing recognition of this had introduced an element of deterrence and movement towards dialogue, with two steps forward and one back. Pakistan's test (albeit with Chinese assistance) does not materially alter the situation. India should keep its cool. Neither is a rogue state and their three wars were among the more "civilised" ones since 1946. Once euphoria and current rhetoric subside, both sides should and probably will move to the table. With war ruled out, ground realities in J&K will shape the agenda and sensible and acceptable solutions can be found.

Sanctions could hurt but must be accepted and used to stiffen national resolve and stimulate internal reform. There must meanwhile be no foolish sabre-rattling, bravado, demoralisation of anybody, or jingoism — of which there has also been some evidence. The Indian tests could in retrospect be a turning point towards building a better and safer world order.

(Courtesy: Outlook, June 15, 1998)

Rare Birds in India and Nepal Threatened by Illegal Trade

Deepak Gajurel writes from Kathmandu

HUNDREDS of thousands of birds from Nepal and India are being smuggled into Pakistan and the Gulf countries through this Himalayan kingdom, conservationists and ornithologists claim.

They warn that unless the governments of the two countries crack down on those who trade in birds in violation of the law, entire species of endangered birds are under threat of being wiped out. Nepal has around 841 species of birds and India has 1,228.

As India and Nepal are signatories to the CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora), trade in all rare animal and

bird species is banned in these nations.

Yet illegal trade in birds is flourishing right under the very nose of the government of Nepal and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation appears to be blissfully unaware of it, experts say.

Traders with hundreds of rare birds in cages are seen in front of Singhdarbar, the national secretariat of this Himalayan kingdom which also houses the prime minister's office, apart from many other streets and markets of Kathmandu. According to a report by the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), bird traders in Kath-

mandu have been exporting thousands of indigenous birds abroad, particularly to Pakistan.

"Tens of thousands of the rare birds including Munia, Maina and Sparrow are exported by a single trader each year since 1995," the report said. The bird trader, Ashmat Ullah of Kathmandu, had cashed in on a 1994 directive regarding bird export issued by the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, the report said.

"Permission had been issued stating that the birds Ullah had pledged to export were not in the endangered list of the CITES," it said. "The permission thus granted to him allowed Ullah to

bring any number of birds from Patna, capital of Bihar state of India, into Kathmandu."

Experts claim the trade in birds is lucrative and big business houses in Patna are engaged in it. Journalists from NEFEJ made a research visit to Patna some time ago and found that some species of birds like Lal Munia, love birds, golden parrots and cockatoos sell for prices between Rs. 250 and 2,000.

"The big cockatoo was being sold in the Chhriya Bazar (bird market) in Patna at Rs. 50,000 for a single bird," Mangal Man Shakyu, who led the research team, told IANS. "The traders in Patna have more birds than in many zoos in India and Nepal," he claimed. — IANS

CLIMATE

Kyoto Protocol Ushers in Good Signs

by Md Asadullah Khan

A National Academy of Science Study in the recent past concluded that the US can reduce energy consumption by 20 per cent or more (resulting in substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions) at a net economic benefit. Most specific cases of benefit are pouring in gradually.

IN the face of mounting debate about the disastrous effect of green house gases, scientists agree on the other hand that the effect is a natural process that makes life on earth possible. This is a process by which various gases act like the glass of a green house, trapping heat near the earth's surface. The green house gases are naturally occurring and include carbon dioxide, methane, water vapour and other trace chemicals. It is now known that man-made chemicals have caused a massive buildup of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere. Precisely true, human activities are changing and enhancing the green house effect. We are, so to say, thickening the walls of the green house with a build up of gases. And those activities that contribute to a build up of these gases include the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation and certain agricultural activities and industrial practices. Scientists have warned time and again that this sort of profligacy with nature, this wanton destruction of forest wealth by chopping down trees indiscriminately, will only invite a grim and disastrous consequence for us like the colossal deluge we had witnessed in 1988 in Bangladesh when the whole country went under water.

A cursory look at the world consumption of fossil fuels will reveal that we are adding a net 3 billion tons a year of carbon to the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and chlorofluorocarbon (CFCs). The world population which now stands at almost five billion will double in another 40 years from now. To combat the pollution problem associated with this population boom and industrialisation, vis-a-vis the global warming caused by green house effect, we need trees, and a lot of them, to absorb the carbon produced by a growing population.

Countries irrespective of their position in the globe need at least 25 per cent as forest zone to sustain life without disastrous environmental hazards. In Bangladesh this ratio, it is learnt, has now come down to 6 per cent because of our senseless activities of cutting down trees without replenishing them. Reports have it that chopping down of trees in Mad-

hupur forest, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet and the mangrove forest of Sundarbans has been going on unabated mostly beyond the knowledge of the proper government agencies causing extensive financial losses and ecological imbalance. Precisely known to all, since the Industrial Revolution, atmospheric levels of carbon have increased by more than 30 per cent. We are now experiencing carbon dioxide levels that are unsurpassed in the last 1,60,000 years. The increase in the green house gas pollution has intensified the natural green house effect, creating global warming. Global warming is a pollution problem, created by the burning of oil, coal and to a lesser extent, natural gas.

As concentrations of greenhouse gases have continued to rise, global average temperatures have risen approximately by 1 degree Fahrenheit. The average temperature for the past six years of the 1990s already make this the warmest decade ever recorded in the history of earth. 1995 was the warmest year on record despite severe winter storms around the world. Records revealed that 1996 was the 6th warmest and scientists now hold that 1998 may be the worst ever experienced. Unless green house gas emissions are curbed, the earth's mean temperature is projected to rise 2 to 6 degrees Fahrenheit in the next century — a rate faster than any observed during the last 10,000 years.

But there are ways to combat greenhouse effect in our day to day activities. Surely, we must realise that forests are like giant utilities providing an indispensable service to the stability of the planet earth in which case Bangladesh is no exception. Stated in obvious terms, forests are carbon dumps. Trees extract carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, emit oxygen and store the carbon in woods, leaves, roots and soil. We must preserve the forests that are there and replenish those that have been destroyed. As we are heading to the end of the 20th century and find ourselves in the throes of an industrial growth, we are alarmed at the worst scenario that might engulf us because of environmental degradation gripping us in various forms.

Earth Day that was observed on April 22 last throughout the world served as a clarion call asking for (a) individual actions that lead up to cooperative environmental solutions; (b) a time to educate ourselves and others about everyday steps we can take; (c) an acknowledgment to tread a little lighter on our planet and respect nature; (d) an understanding that a healthy environment nourishes our quality of life, and (e) a time to appreciate and celebrate the Earth.

Left to humans to multiply their wealth and meet ever-growing needs, global warming will increase the incidence of many infectious diseases. Changes in climate may drastically expand the ranges of many disease carrying insects and rodents, thereby increasing the incidence of malaria, dengue fever etc. Most alarming, global warming may increase the incidence of malaria among as much as 50 to 60 per cent of the world's population. Disappointingly, until now there is no vaccine for malaria.

Global warming may lead to increased incidence of food and water borne diseases. Scientists assert that climate-related increases in sea surface temperature and sea levels are expected to increase the incidence of cholera, which killed 1,20,000 people in 1995, mostly children. Increased sea temperatures are also expected to promote algae blooms that can spur the growth of organisms responsible for red tides increasing the incidence of shellfish poisonings.

Effects of global warming on weather patterns may lead to additional adverse human health impacts. Regional stress on agriculture may cause up to 300 million cases of malnutrition. The availability of fresh water may be threatened by extremes of the hydrologic cycle (floods and droughts) which are projected to become more common. Diseases associated with flooding, such as diarrhoeal diseases in under developed and even developing countries where drought compromises personal hygiene, could affect millions more people every

year. **Kyoto Protocol** The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change that was adopted by over 160 nations on December 11, 1997 setting binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions for developed countries, has been opposed by the polluting industries in the US on the plea that it will result in massive job losses and reduced living standards for all Americans. Precisely known to all, facts reveal that the US is the number one contributor to global warming. With only 4 per cent of world's population, the US accounts for 22 per cent of emissions. But these critics have misled the media and public for a long time revealing only one side of the story: the costs and not the benefits, of steps to prevent global warming. It is worth mentioning as reports reveal in recent times, that eight Nobel laureate economists supported by more than 2400 of their colleagues concluded in May last that this one sided story does not provide a true picture of the impact on the US economy in implementing the treaty because it fails to consider that cutting energy waste, foreign oil and emissions will increase efficiency, reduce costs and add jobs. It is true that costs of reducing green house pollution are not insignificant since these include costs of research and development, new technology and job loss in a few specific factors of the economy, but it is also true that more balanced economic analyses anticipate substantial economic benefits including cost saving from increased efficiency, improved competitiveness, job gains and increased investment in several high-tech sectors of the economy.

Despite skepticism from the developed countries, studies have concluded that the economic benefits from climate policies will far exceed costs. For example, a National Academy of Science Study in the recent past concluded that the US can reduce energy consumption by 20 per cent or more

(resulting in substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions) at a net economic benefit. Most specific cases of benefit are pouring in gradually. Taking advantage of high efficiency motors, computerised controls, cogeneration and industry specific technologies, annual energy savings to US industry between 11 and 37 per cent by 2015 or an estimated \$183 billion a year by 2010 is likely to be achieved. When scientists warned that CFCs were depleting the Earth's protective ozone layer, a representative of Du Pont told Congress that a quick phase out of the chemicals would "critically affect the way we live" and disrupt our economic system or life style. But in fact the phase-out of CFCs is an economic success story. Du Pont in its recently released bulletin says that it is currently saving \$31 million annually from a variety of energy efficiency improvements.

Now Chemical saves more than \$7.5 million a year in its Louisiana division by implementing energy saving projects. The projects, it is learnt, have an annual rate of return on investment of 204 per cent. Lockheed architects by making greater use of natural light built an engineering development and design facility that cuts energy use in half and saves \$500,000 a year on Lockheed's energy bills. The Chrysler Corporation has developed a new automobile paint application system that will save an estimated 46.5 billion Btu (British Thermal Unit) of energy and approximately \$4 million per year.

The Protocol sets binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions for 38 developed countries. Countries accepted varying targets based on the principle of "differentiation", which recognises that some countries are more capable of reducing their emissions than others because of how they produce and use energy, their access to clean technologies and their relative levels of pollution, among numerous other factors.

The Protocol commits the US to reducing its emissions to an average of 7 per cent below its 1990 levels in the years 2008-2012. The European Union has a target of 8 per cent below its 1990 levels, and Australia a target of 8 per cent above its 1990 levels. Parties were given a target of 2008-2012, a five year average instead of a single year as target so that they will not be forced into non-compliance by unavoidable short-term jumps in emissions that may result from events like extreme weather.

The protocol restricts emissions of six greenhouse gases. They are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (NO₂), hydrofluorocarbon (HFCs) perfluoro carbons (PFCs) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆).

Notably reports in recent times reveal that the most important developing countries have already cut a greater proportion of their greenhouse emissions than industrialised countries. Just six developing countries notably China, India, Mexico, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and Brazil are responsible for 63 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions from the developing world which amounts to only 16 per cent of total annual world wide emissions. These six developing countries, it is learnt through reports circulated in the early part of June, are actually cutting carbon emissions twice as fast as industrialised countries. While industrialised countries reduced fossil fuel subsidies by an average of 20 per cent between 1990 and 1996, 14 developing countries accounting for one quarter of global carbon emissions cut their subsidies almost in half leading to a lower rates of growth in carbon emissions.

Some of the developing world's largest greenhouse gas emitters have launched energy efficiency and renewable energy programmes. • China gets one-quarter of its total energy from renewable sources (i.e. wind, solar etc.) and over an eighth of its electricity from cogeneration visibly in much greater proportions than in most industrialised coun-

tries. And after reducing oil subsidies to as little as 2 per cent in the 1980s, China reduced the growth of its carbon emissions by 40 per cent.

• Mexico has developed national energy efficiency standards for new boilers, refrigerators, air conditioners, buildings, and electric motors.

• India subsidises the development of renewable energy sources. Wind turbine equipment, for example, qualifies for a 100 per cent accelerated depreciation in its first year.

• Brazil has reduced fossil fuel emissions by 15 per cent through an aggressive programme that has replaced one-half of the nation's gasoline with ethanol.

Smog: The American Petroleum Institute predicted in 1979 that standards to reduce would result in "extreme social and economic disruption." General Motors predicted "widespread inflation and employee layoffs." Despite these dire warnings, the EPA enacted the standards, and neither the American Petroleum Institute nor General Motors "extreme" and "widespread" predictions came true.

Vinyl Chloride: The president of Freestone's plastics division predicted in 1974 that if the plastics industry was forced

to comply with proposed standards for vinyl chloride, it would put the industry "on a collision course with economic disaster." The standard was set, the industry did not "collide" with disaster. Studies now show that projections overshoot actual costs by 445 per cent.

What all this requires is self-discipline on the part of the world's haves and increased assistance to have nots. Today a billion people live in a degree of squalor that forces them to deplete the environment without regard to its future. Similarly, in developing or under developed countries, governments are often too crippled by international debt and corruption to afford the short term costs of ecological prudence and that underscores the fact that protecting the global environment is inextricably linked with eliminating poverty. That calls upon the advanced nations of the North to make available to the desperate nations in the South i.e. in the under developed and developing countries like Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka efficient new technologies that spare the environment while encouraging growth.

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Sari-clad Madonna on Rolling Stone Cover

Lisa Tsering writes from San Francisco

B EDECKED in a sari and 22-carat gold jewellery, hair flaming around her shoulders and a 'bindi' placed just so, Madonna beckons from the pages of the latest issue of Rolling Stone magazine.

"She very much wants to visit India," Joanna Wietsma, a member of the star's publicity team, said. "She's a fan of Indian pop music and films," she added. The July 9-23 issue of Rolling Stone features a photo spread entitled 'Madonna's Indian Summer' and a shot of the star on its cover. One picture shows the pop goddess rising from a sparkling pool like Hindu goddess of learning Saraswati, accompanied by graceful swans. In another shot, she sits cradled in a giant mehndi-decorated hand in a room painted in a blue so bright it could only be found in India.

"There's a lot of interest now in Indian jewellery," Dhaneesh Bhandi of Bhandi Jewellers here, who selected the pieces for the shoot, told the California newspaper India-West. "People tend to be very selective until they see a celebrity wearing it. Then they must follow suit!"

— India Abroad News Service