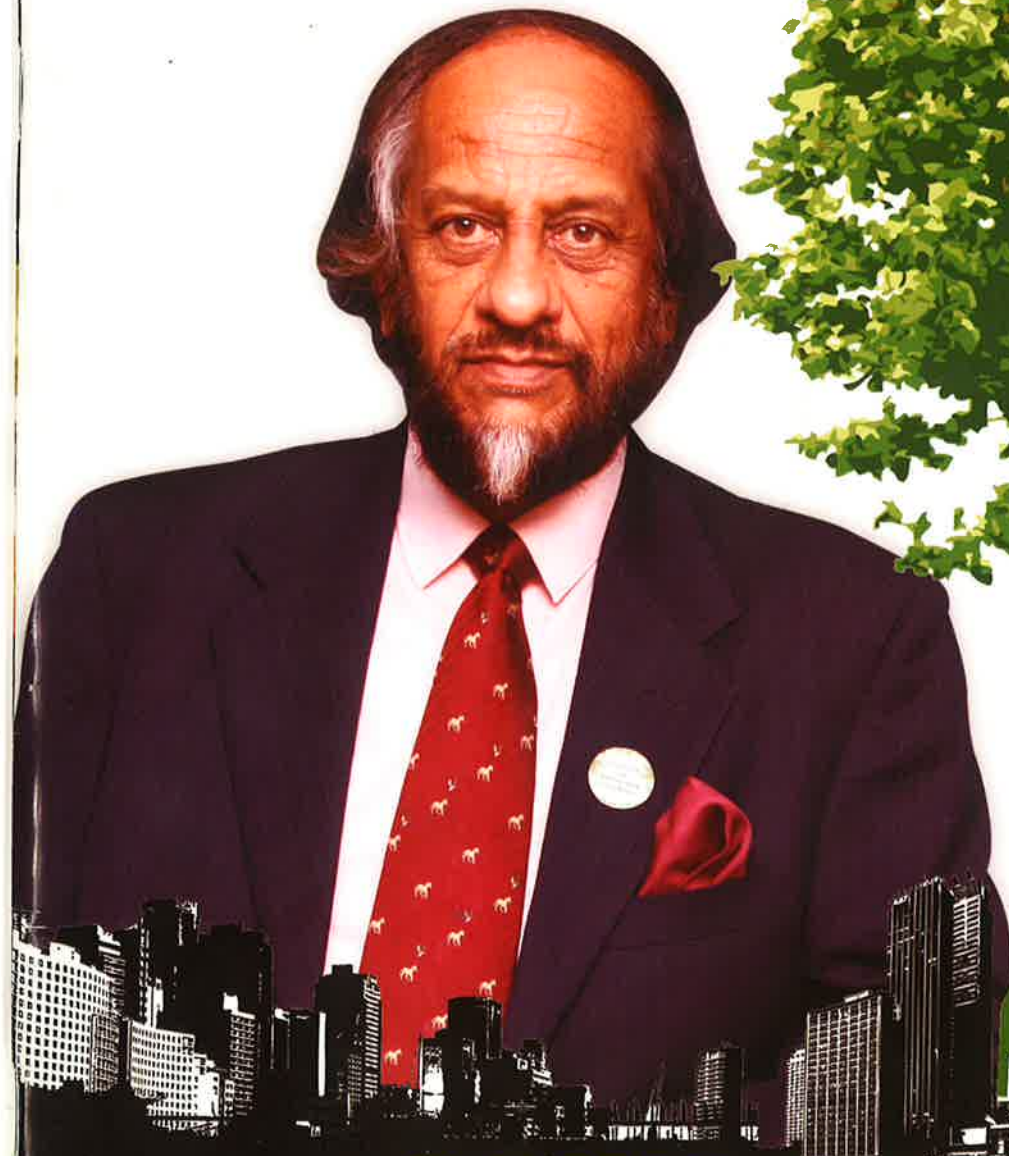


THE GREAT CHINA-INDIA DEBATE... KIRAN FINDS A SECOND HOME

Khaleej Times May 23 - 29, 2008

# Weekend



## GOING GREEN

R.K. PACHAURI: CLIMATE FOR CHANGE HAS TAKEN ROOT

# Looking beyond stereotypes

Art can provide us with an insight into not only the minds of the artists, but also throw light on the region they come from, giving rise to an interesting conversation.

BY VEATHIKA JAIN

**W** E SAY that the world has become a smaller place. But we often don't know our next-door neighbours. The same could be true of other countries of the world. We may not know much about the tradition and culture of our neighbouring countries.

An art exhibition called Destination Asia — Flying Over Stereotypes' Conversation-1, attempts to provide a window to Asian art. Launched at the Elementa Art Gallery at the Dubai Airport Free zone, it is on till July.

The exhibition is the third phase of a collaboration between Indian, Pakistani and Central Asian artists, and showcases their works in a very meaningful way.

It essentially began as an endeavour to introduce contemporary art practices of the three regions. Thirty artists were selected to participate in the project.

"The three regions — India, Pakistan and Central Asia — are historically connected, but their art has had no interaction. But the language of art is common and what is depicted in the exhibits is related to each other through a common thread," says Quddos Mirza, a curator from Pakistan.

The Pakistani artists have brought interesting works of art in the form of quilts, little picture frames, paintings, while the Central Asian Artists, for example depict Chenghis Khan and his spoils of war on a map drawn on a canvas resembling the skin of a horse.

All the artists have tried to relate their works to a city or their lost identity.

The Central Asian artist, Said Atabeko's



**WINDOW TO THE WORLD: Art helps break barriers and look at the world with a new vision.**

art is called The Walkman. It has been inspired by Darwish, the 7<sup>th</sup>-century mystical and spiritual icon.

It is evident that the Central Asian artists are trying to find their identity as they have come under mixed influences from Asia and Europe. "The same goes for India and Pakistan, as well," says Valeria Ibraeva, a curator from Central Asia.

Conversation-1 also presents photographs depicting a certain sequence of a character which is in conversation with the rest of the artwork.

Indian artist Pushpamala N. presents her works on a set of stills called The Phantom Lady.

"I play the role of Phantom Lady — how she is looking for her lost twin sister. And at the same time, she performs stunts. It's an adventure-thriller through which she's trying to find her roots. My work is shot in Bombay where I reside and have grown up. And somewhere in the pictures, I am looking for my childhood in this amazing city," says Pushpamala.

Another Indian artist, Shakuntala Kulkarni, emphasises feminism in her work. "When 'she' roared, the universe quaked," says the artist.

"My work is a set of stain glass paintings showcasing woman in different

martial arts poses. It is about the roles we play as women — how we deal with a patriarchal society. The imagery is playful and I play with the body politics of the paintings as well as the audience, as they are supposed to view it with a mirror. It combines the artist's, paintings and the viewer's body language, making it a single piece of art."

The exhibition has certainly helped an exchange of ideas, examined impressions about the other, their shared histories, and relative ignorance, despite the geographic proximity.

Issues of urbanisation, migration, dispossession, developing economies and its unequal distribution

seem to emerge as commonalities in all the works.

Showcasing half of the "conversation" now and the other half later, the show is an attempt to know more about Asian countries.

"Since we have involved three countries and their artists, we thought it was ideal to host the exhibition in Dubai, as it's in another Asian country, where art is being encouraged," says Sharmila Samant, a curator from India.

"We needed to have another conversation with a different Asian country. It's an exposure to not only the artists, but also to the viewers, breaking the East-West myth and connecting more within the continent."

The juxtaposition of images has been able to evoke conversations between the works, playing with, assuming and altering stereotypical and archetypal images, deconstructing contemporary realities using the self. They fall between the real and the imagined, between the artistic and the actual, where use of materials and props commentate on the rituals of life, culture and tradition, of belonging to the ancient, along with the globalised and contemporary consumerist societies in urban settings.

The works bring three neighbouring regions close to each other and gives an insight into the fourth as well.

# Caught in the web

Sreelakshmi Suresh has just completed Class 5, but the remarkable youngster has been entrusted with the onerous task of designing the web site for the Kerala Legislative Assembly. *Weekend* talks to the small wonder.



**CLICK TO WIN: Sreelakshmi Suresh loves to explore the web with her mouse.**

BY T RAMAVARMAN

**I** M AGINE AN eight-year old girl venturing into the complex world of web and designing and mastering it! It certainly sounds improbable, if not impossible. But Sreelakshmi Suresh, a Grade 5 student of the Presentation Higher Secondary School at Kozhikkode, Kerala, India, has already accomplished this remarkable feat.

She became one of the youngest web designers in the world by launching the official web site of her school when she was in Class 3, two years ago. She was only eight years old then. The web site, [www.presentationhss.com](http://www.presentationhss.com), contained 20 links related to the school. The web pages were developed and designed by her using Microsoft FrontPage.

This won her several accolades from within the country and outside. She is now the first official member of the American Association of Webmasters in the below 18 category.

The officials of the Guinness Book of World Records have approached her to explore the possibility of entering her name as the youngest web designer in the world.

Enthused by the reports of her early mastery over the world of web designing, the Speaker of the Kerala Legislature has decided to entrust the task of designing the web site of the Legislative Assembly to her.

Her father, Suresh Menon, is a practising lawyer in Kozhikkode, while her mother Viju Suresh Menon is a school-teacher.

Here is an excerpt from the interview:

**When did you get introduced to the world of computers?**

We had a PC at home since 1998, when I was only about three-and-a-half years old. My dad taught me to use MS Paint. I used to draw circles, rectangles,

and colour them while sitting on his lap.

Then I learnt English alphabets using Microsoft Word. When I joined LKG, I was able to type all the alphabets by using Word. Till I was seven, I used Paint and Word and then started using Microsoft FrontPage to design Web Pages.

Maybe because of my friendship with computers from my early childhood, I'm fond of computer applications. Last year, I got a laptop too.

**Did your parents have an interest in computers?**

Yes, my dad is very much interested in computers. He is a lawyer and has been using the computer for his office work since a long time.

**How did you begin designing web-sites?**

When I was seven, my dad showed me a web site designed by a young boy and told me that if I was interested, I too could do it.

I really got thrilled and started studying web designing. My dad taught me the basics. Then I visited several websites and tried my own designs and modified them again and again to make them more attractive.

**Why did you choose to make the web site for your school?**

My school did not have a web site of its own. So, when I became confident of designing a web site, decided to do it for my school. I told my dad to discuss it with our Headmistress. Immediately, the Headmistress, Sister Roselit, called me and asked about the details and told me to do it. She directed another teacher, Sister Justina, to give me all the material and information required.

**Have you designed any other web site?**

Yes, I have designed [www.edesign.co.in](http://www.edesign.co.in), [www.sreelakshmi.co.cc](http://www.sreelakshmi.co.cc) and [www.lion-scalicutmetro.com](http://www.lion-scalicutmetro.com).

**Have you been awarded the contract**

for making the Kerala Assembly web site?

I contacted the Speaker of Kerala Niyamasabha (the Legislative Assembly) and offered to design a web site in Malayalam. He happily agreed and informed me that the Legislative Secretary was deputed to do the needful. The Legislative Secretary told me that the concerned department would send the data and the letter duly entrusting me to do the work. I have designed the main page and am waiting for the data to do the rest.

**How much is the cost and what is the timeframe?**

We have not discussed the cost so far. I hope I can finish the work within a month after receiving the required data.

**How many awards have you received so far?**

I have received 28 awards, including the Global Internet Directories Gold Award USA, Association of American Webmasters Merit Award, USA, Planeta Foto Silver Award, Brazil and Association of American Webmasters Official Membership — only Child member ever and also a few awards and honours from local clubs and associations.

**Any other web design plans?**

Now I am working on a site called [www.e-sandesh.com](http://www.e-sandesh.com) in Malayalam with important news items, famous quotations, and other items for children. It is under construction.

**What has been the response from the Guinness Book officials?**

Guinness Book authorities collected the details from me and sent an agreement for me to sign. I have signed and sent it back to them. Now I am waiting for their response.

**What do you want to become in life?**

I want to study more and more in the field of Computer Science and become a very good software engineer.