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## POLLUTING OLD VEHICLES TO GO OFF THE ROADS

**T**he first shot in the fight against air pollution in our cities has just been fired. The National Green Tribunal (NGT), which decides law cases relating to the environment, has ordered that diesel vehicles older than 10 years must go off Delhi's roads. Diesel vehicles are more polluting than petrol ones, and the older vehicles release more pollution into the air.

The NGT has given owners of diesel vehicles ten days to take their cars and trucks off the roads. Most of these will be trucks and small vans used to transport goods. It will also affect trucks that bring fruits and vegetables into Delhi. A lot of large trucks also drive through the capital on their way to other states and this ban will put an end to this. As a lot of Delhi's pollution is caused by such trucks, the move is expected to improve the air quality in Delhi.

The NGT's decision was triggered (caused) by the sharp jump in air pollution in Delhi. According to some reports, Delhi has the worst air of any city in the world. In addition to banning old diesel vehicles, the NGT is looking at ways to bring down the number of vehicles on Delhi's roads as these are mainly responsible for the city's bad air. It is considering rules such as high registration charges for families owning more than one vehicle.



**Although the NGT's orders are right now applicable only to Delhi, it is only a matter of time before the new laws are extended to other cities as well.**

## THE SNOW LEOPARD SEEKS A COMPANY



Photo Courtesy: Wikipedia

A Snow Leopard

Many of India's rarest animals and birds, such as the Snow Leopard, Great Indian Bustard and the Lesser Florican need help in order to escape extinction. But, sadly, the Government is spending less and less money on them. This year, national parks and sanctuaries and programmes that work to save endangered species will receive 25% less money from the government.

As a result, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) is now looking for help from companies to fund programs for the protection of specific species.

Companies are being asked if they would like to support Snow Leopards for ₹35 crore, Gharials for ₹80 crore, Great Indian Bustards for ₹104.5 crore, Whale Sharks for Rs 10 crore and Black-necked Cranes for ₹5 crore. This is the first time that companies have been asked to adopt a specific species.

No one has answered the call of the Snow Leopard (or any of the others for that matter) yet, but let's hope, for the sake of the environment, that someone does!

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A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt



# ONLY TWO INTACT FORESTS LEFT ON EARTH

A new study by a group of international scientists has shown that there are just two truly intact forests left in the world – the Amazon and the Congo. Other forests have been fragmented (broken into pieces) by human settlements in and around them.

## Shocking truth

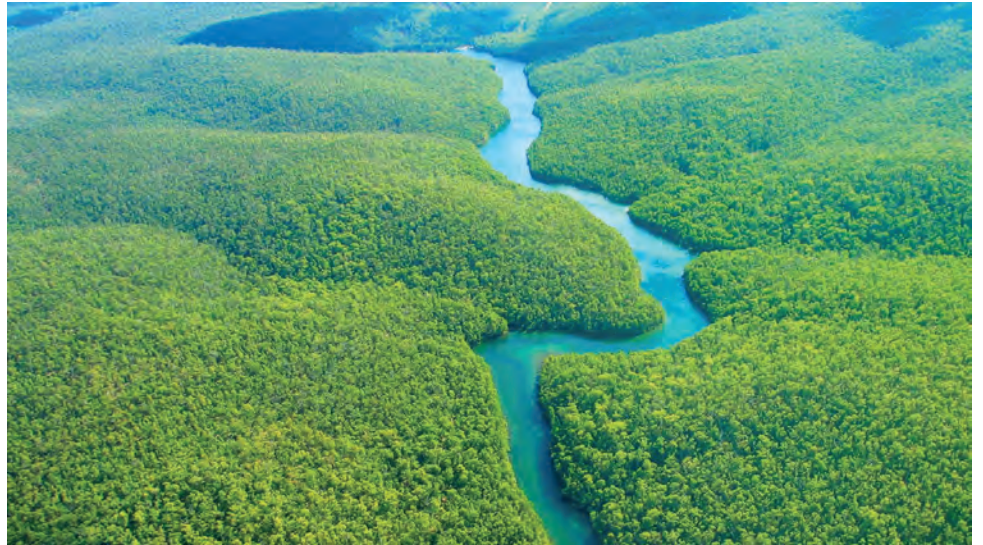
The study revealed that 70% of forest lands are just a kilometer from the edge of the wilderness, or in other words, still very close to human settlements. And where humans live and work, there are bound to be roads, and perhaps even railways.

Today roads cut through forests and wild areas, often creating barriers that animals cannot cross. Villages and clearing of land for farming near forests also create barriers, and when animals try to break these down or cross over, human-animal conflicts develop, sometimes leading to deathly results.

Take for instance what is happening to North-east India's elephants. A rail line in northern Bengal that cuts through Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary and the Buxa Tiger Reserve, has been renamed by local people as the 'killer track' since it has killed so much wildlife. In a horrific incident, on November 13, 2013, a train on this track rammed into a herd of elephants, killing 7 and injuring 10 others.

## The impact

When forests are sliced up, it can have another serious long term effect – the loss of species that simply disappear along with the forests. To understand this, the scientists behind the forest study looked at the results of seven experiments, which had been taking place for years on five different continents, that aimed to mimic the effect of forest destruction for human



The Amazon rainforest



An elephant knocked down by a train in India

activity. These experiments showed that dividing forests by building roads, railways and towns could result in loss of species by anything from 13% to 75% (that's 1 in 13 or 1 in 75).

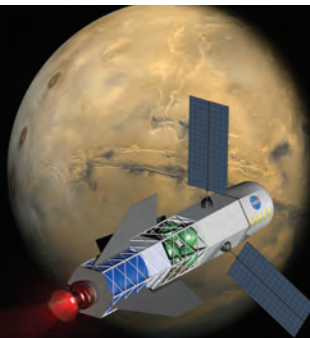
In other words, it is clear that we lose a lot when we break up a forest by building roads and railway tracks.

The actual cost of such development may thus be much, much higher than

the cost of a longer road that goes around the forest instead of cutting through it.

## MARS IN 39 DAYS?

A company in the United States (US) called Ad Astra Rocket is working on an amazing new rocket engine that could take humans to Mars in just 39 days. Rockets in use now make the journey in six months to a year. The new engine, which is called 'Vasimr', will use plasma. Plasma is the fourth state of matter and is a kind of gas that has an electric charge. Radio waves will be used to heat up the plasma to very high temperatures. The plasma will be ejected out of the rocket. The backward ejection will give the rocket forward momentum (force) and help it zoom to Mars. US space agency NASA has given Ad Astra Rocket ten million dollars to develop this new engine over the next three years. If it succeeds, it could change space exploration forever.



## A PLANET FOR ANAND



Indian chess champ Vishwanathan Anand now has a planet named after him. A minor planet in the solar system that is located between Mars and Jupiter has been named 'Vishyanand'. Apparently, Anand's interest in astronomy inspired the International Astronomical Union (which decides the names of planets) to name Minor planet 4538 after him.





## NATURE MATTERS

# MY HOME, MY WAY!

It's summer time, and although exotic migratory birds have flown away, there is plenty of action to watch as birds build nests and raise young ones. To celebrate the spirit of the season, we bring you a feature on some of the weirdest and most wonderful bird nests found around the world.

### Roof over my head

The sociable weavers of Southern Africa build nests that are similar to apartment blocks with many birds sharing a common nest. It looks like a haystack tossed into a tree but the nest is actually a shared dwelling that can sometimes house a 100 weaver families. Inside the 'haystack' there are many nesting rooms each 4 to 6 inches wide. The covered nest keeps weaver families cool during the hot day and cosy at night!

### In a soup!

Edible Nest Swiftlets are birds found in South-east Asia (in India, they are found in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands). They use their own saliva (spit) to build nests on cliffs. Layers of saliva harden to form a hammock style nest. Unfortunately, these nests are much in demand in certain parts of the world for making



Montezuma Oropendola nests



The 'haystacks' are actually Sociable Weaver nests in the tree

'bird's nest soup.' The demand for these nests has placed these birds in great danger.

### A stitch in time

The Golden-headed Cisticola from Australia is a fine tailor – it actually sews a canopy or roof for its nest using spiderwebs. The bird takes leaves and makes holes in them using its beak. It then 'passes' the spider silk through the holes to 'stitch' the canopy together. This clever canopy protects the nest from predators.

### Christmas stockings

Seen in profile, nests of the Montezuma Oropendolas look like stuffed stockings. These Central American birds build nests that dangle from trees in clusters of more than 30. These nests can be as long as six feet and are made of vines and banana fibers. The nest is made by the female bird under the close inspection of the male. If he doesn't like the nest, he tears it apart and she has to start over!!

Have you seen any unusual nests lately?

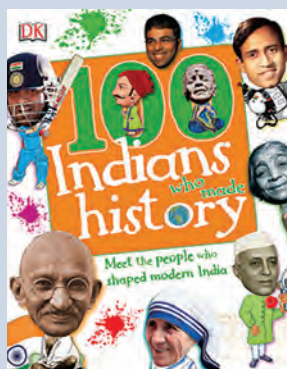
## THE BOOK NOOK

# 100 Indians who made History

The main trouble with a lot of History books is that they teach you in great detail about kings and queens who lived hundreds of years ago, but leave you quite ignorant of modern Indians who came up with ideas and thoughts that also changed the world. Dorling Kindersley's '100 Indians who made History' sets that imbalance right.

The book looks at important Indians from long, long ago to the present day through the prism of impact – How did they change their times? How did they inspire others? How did they utterly change the world?

As a result, the book has a wide cast of characters – from Chhatrapati Shivaji to JRD Tata, from Aryabhatta to Homi J Bhabha, from Kalidasa to Lata Mangeshkar (If many of these names are unfamiliar to you, it could be a sign that you need



to read the book).

What we loved about the book is that it brings alive characters from ancient history (you'll have Ashoka the Great addressing you directly from within the pages) while explaining in the simplest terms what great scientists contributed (for example, the greatest discovery of JC Bose was that he proved to the world that plants had life). Colourful pages and illustrations make it an easy read.

A must-have book for your shelf!

Published by Dorling Kindersley

Price: ₹350





### The Indus Valley seal



**How old is it?** It was made between 3300 and 1300 BCE  
**It can be seen at:** The National Museum, New Delhi

Let's start at the very beginning shall we? The seals of the Indus Valley Civilization are very famous as they are one of the few remaining things that have survived to tell us the story of people of the Indus Valley. Here, you are looking at an image of a ritual or ceremony. Upfront are the seven people (1) who are taking part in the ritual while behind them to the left is a figure who seems to be inside the trunk of a tree (2). It is believed that this could be a god worshipped by the Indus Valley people. To the right a priest has brought an animal for a sacrifice (3). The seal is important as it shows that the Indus Valley People had a sophisticated or complex (opposite of simple) kind of religion, one that involved gods, priests, rituals and sacrifices.

## 6 GEMS OF INDIA YOU SHOULD KNOW

India is rich in art and architecture, but there is so much more to it than the Taj Mahal, the Gateway of India, the Red Fort, the Leaning Pillar, the Charminar or the Mughal miniatures. Also, when you think of India, you think of a universe of paintings, sculpture, temples and buildings. India is a land of many religions - Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity - have thrived here. In this Special Report, art historian **Kavita Singh**, who teaches at the National Museum, New Delhi, takes us on a journey through lesser-known treasures of Indian art.

### The Taming of Nalagiri

Buddhist stupas are religious buildings constructed over a relic of Buddha (a relic could be something the Buddha used or even a part of his body such as a bone). One of the most fabulous stupas was built at Amravati (in present day Andhra Pradesh) by the emperor Ashoka around 200 BCE. Other rulers kept adding to it till Amravati was one of the biggest stupas. The stupa was sadly damaged and now only pieces of its glorious sculptures remain at the Government Museum in Egmore and British Museum in London. The panel, whose image is alongside, depicts a scene from the life of Buddha. Buddha's cousin Devdutt was jealous of him and once sent a mad elephant to attack him (the elephant on left is trying to crush someone) but when the animal sees the Buddha, it becomes calm and bows to him (see the kneeling animal on the right). The scene is watched by many people including those on a balcony.

Can you see how detailed the carving is and how rich it is in storylore? Now, can you imagine how the rest of the massive stupa would have been, carved all around with panels, each with its own imagery and story?

### The Varaha at Udaigiri

This massive rock carving which is 13 feet tall depicts the Hindu god Vishnu in the avatar (form) of a boar rescuing Mother Earth from the ocean that threatens to immerse her. Bhudevi or Mother Earth is depicted as a woman clinging to his tusks. In the background are carved the sages and holy men who witnessed this magical feat. The sculpture, which was made during the time of the Gupta kings, stands out for its sheer scale and the beauty of the carving which brings alive this famous moment from Indian mythology.

See how the artist has made Vishnu seem like a superhero with his strong physique (body structure) and the way he towers above everyone.



**How old is it?** It was made around 5th century AD (between years 400-500).  
**It can be seen at:** Udaigiri Cave, near Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh





The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.

—Aristotle



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# INDIAN ART NOW ABOUT

o our art heritage than the Ashoka  
u think of art, consider the entire  
so lucky in that so many religions –  
influenced India's art heritage.  
Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University,  
n art that you should know about.



**How old is it?** It was made around 200 CE  
**It can be seen at:** Government Museum, Chennai

## Srirangam Temple

Towering above the landscape of rice fields and farms, the tower of the Ranganatha Swamy temple has dominated the countryside around the temple town of Srirangam for centuries. The temple was built over many years starting from the first century AD while the last big addition was made as recently as 1987. It sits on an island in the Cauvery River.

All major kings of Tamil Nadu – the Cholas, Pandyas, Hoysalas and Vijayanagar kings – contributed to the temple, making it a living monument to the history of Tamil Nadu between years 800 and 1600. It is surrounded by seven walls arranged in circles and has a famous hall with a 1000 intricately carved pillars. It is the largest functioning (working) temple in the world with the second tallest temple tower in Asia.



**How old is it?** Built over the last 2000 years

**It can be seen at:** Srirangam, near Trichy in Tamil Nadu

## The Shatrunjaya Pata of the Jains

A Shatrunjaya Pata is an enormous cloth painting that shows the Shatrunjaya hill at Palitana in Gujarat and its hundreds of Jain temples. Making a pilgrimage to Shatrunjaya is important for Jains. On festival days, the Patas are displayed at Jain temples for the benefit of those who are unable to undertake the journey to the actual hill. The Jains believe that by looking upon a Shatrunjaya Pata and praying, one can make a spiritual or mental pilgrimage (a religious visit) to the Shatrunjaya hill. How marvelous that one can make a journey through a work of art!

A Shatrunjaya Pata, like the one shown here is a massive piece of art so worshippers can view details without any difficulty.



**How old are they?** Most of the Shatrunjaya Patas that survive were made in the 19th century.

**Where can I see one?** There is one Shatrunjaya Pata on display in the paintings gallery of the National Museum, New Delhi.

## The Paintings of the Padshahnama

The Padshahnama is the story of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan that was written primarily by Abdul Hamid Lahori. It contains some magnificent illustrations such as the one alongside, called 'The Siege of Qandahar'. Qandahar or Kandahar is in present day Afghanistan and the painting depicts a battle fought by the Mughals there. Look at the close-up images printed here to see the fantastic amount of detail in the painting. On the ground lie bodies of those who died in the battle, and you can even see remains of skeletons (showing perhaps the artist's sympathy for the common man who always suffers during a war). At the bottom left of the painting, you can see two rabbits, and one of them is even peacefully looking at its reflection. The peacefulness of the scene is a complete contrast to the battle going on and it perhaps reflects the artist's view on the uselessness of all war.



**How old is it?**  
It was completed in 1656  
**It can be seen at:** This copy of the Padshahnama belongs to the Queen of Britain. It is kept in the library of Windsor Castle near London.





## INDIA

# AN UNWELCOME RAIN

**A**pril is the start of the hot season in India, but this year, there has been a lot of rain in most Indian states from March 1 to April 15. While the cool weather has provided a welcome respite for those of us who live in cities, it brought nothing but grief (sadness) to lakhs of farmers in the countryside.

That's because the unseasonal rain (it never rains this much at this time of the year) destroyed crops in the field. Dry weather is needed for crops such as wheat to ripen for harvest, so when it rains instead, the wheat grains are spoiled. In states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh, many farmers have lost their entire crop of wheat, rice, fruits and vegetables.

### What does this mean?

With crops spoiled, farmers will have nothing to sell and no way to earn money. The Government of India has said that it would give the farmers some money to make good their loss, but this would not cover (make good) their entire loss.

In some places, the rains have brought about such destruction that farmers do not even have enough grain left to feed their own families.

### Problems ahead

2015 may not be an easy year for the Indian farmer. Weather scientists are saying that there is a 50% chance that we will see the El Nino effect this monsoon. El Nino is a weather event that causes the waters of the Pacific to warm up more than usual and this reduces the amount of monsoon rainfall in India during June to September. So, unfortunately, the farmer may not get the rain when he or she actually needs it.



Farmers look at wheat crops destroyed by rain



### Mangoes gone!

Mangoes are the fruit of the Indian summer, but this year it looks like we will have to make do with less of this delicious, golden fruit. The rains came down just at the time that the mango trees were beginning to blossom and the mango flowers were turning into tiny fruit, causing flowers and tiny fruit to drop down. Expect the fruit to be much costlier this summer.

## WORLD

## Indians come home

In the last issue, we told you about war breaking out in the West Asian country of Yemen. A lot of Indians work in Yemen and over the past few weeks, the Indian government has been working hard to get these people home before the situation becomes worse.

Between March 31 and April 9, the Indian government has evacuated 4000 people from Yemen by air and by ship in a smooth operation that has won praise from many. Many of the rescued people were nurses and workers who were trapped in Yemen when the war suddenly broke out. Many were stuck in their homes, unable to go out to even buy food.

With most of them safe and sound back in India, we can breathe a sigh of relief!



Rescued Indians travel back to India in an airplane

## WORLD

## Hillary for President?

Hillary Clinton has announced her decision to run (contest) for the job as the President of the United States (US) in the 2016 US presidential elections. Clinton, the wife of the former US President, Bill Clinton, will now have to get herself nominated as the candidate of the Democratic political party and this will be the first of many steps in the complicated US presidential election.

The US has two main political parties – the Democrats and the Republicans. A person who wants to become President has to get himself/herself nominated as the candidate of one of these parties, which is itself a tough challenge. The successful Democratic and Republican candidates then need to fight it out for the top job.

If she wins, Hillary Clinton will make history as the first female President of the United States.







I don't think I'm old enough or experienced enough to give anyone any guidance. All I would like say is that as long as you're having fun, I think you're doing the right thing.

—Sania Mirza



SPORTS

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# Sania Mirza: On top of the world

Indian tennis player Sania Mirza made history last week-end by becoming the first Indian woman to become the No 1 doubles player in the world. She, along with partner, Martina Hingis (herself a former world no 1 in singles) won the WTA Family Circle Cup in the United States on Sunday and this win gave Sania the points to go to the top of the table. Mirza and Hingis have had a great run since they paired up in March. The WTA Family Circle Cup is the third title they have won in a row and the pair has not lost a single tournament. For Sania, the past 12 months have been full of high moments. She won the US Open in 2014, followed by the Asian Games gold medal and the year-end WTA title.

Hingis, who retired from playing tennis singles in 2007, is having an incredible run with Indian partners. She won the Australian Open mixed doubles title in January 2015 with Leander Paes and is now playing extremely well with Sania Mirza in the women's doubles events.



Sania Mirza (left) with Martina Hingis

## Indian Premier League (IPL) 8: What to watch for

### Team Consistent

The team that stays together, plays well together – the Chennai Super Kings team (CSK) has certainly made this come true. The core team has remained unchanged over the years and they have a winning combination of captain (MS Dhoni) and coach (Stephen Fleming). Not surprisingly, CSK has won more of their matches than any other team. CSK has lifted the IPL trophy twice.



### Newcomers to watch

An elegant batsman who has made a good start this IPL, KL Rahul of Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) is a player to watch, not just in the IPL, but as a future India player. He has already made a good contribution to his team this season, helping SRH to early victories over rivals like Royal Challengers Bangalore. Another player to watch is KC Cariappa who was picked up by KKR for a huge sum, unusual for an unknown player. Will he become another Narine-like weapon for KKR? We will have to wait and watch.



KL Rahul (on the right) with his captain Shikhar Dhawan

### Narine's got the ball

West Indies spinner Sunil Narine was the key to his team Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR's) wins in the IPL in 2012 and 2014 (they lifted the IPL trophy in those two years). But last year he was banned from bowling due to a suspected illegal action. He was cleared by the International Cricket Council (ICC) this year and was allowed to play for KKR. He is now bowling with a different action, but



the new technique failed to get him any wickets in the first two games.



### The Aussies take it home

The Australians have taken home the World Cup for the fourth time, by defeating New Zealand in the finals of the ICC Cricket World Cup in early April. Australian bowler Mitchell Starc, who took 22 wickets and provided important break-throughs for the Aussies in many matches was declared the Man of the Tournament.





## Art Quest

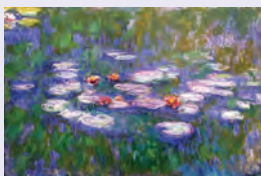
You read about Indian art in this issue. Now can you identify these famous works of art from other parts of the world?



1



2



3



4

Answers:  
1. Michelangelo's David  
2. Salvador Dalí's Persistence of Memory  
3. Claude Monet's Water Lilies  
4. The Blue Mosque at Istanbul

## UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS

Re-arrange the alphabets to find the word

**Hint:** All clues are linked to the theme of art

1. TNGIAPN

2. ERTPLUCSU

3. CETRUTEHICAR

4. TTSIAR

Answers  
1. Painting  
2. Sculpture  
3. Architecture  
4. Artist

## FIND THE HIDDEN PICTURES

Can you find the second bird in this painting by Ukrainian artist Oleg Shuplyak?



## Top Reads for Kids and Young Adults

1. Pashu: Animal Tales from Hindu Mythology by Devdutt Pattanaik
2. Malgudi Schooldays by RK Narayan
3. Back in Time by Geronimo Stilton
4. Marly's Ghost by David Levithan
5. The Kaboom Kid: The Big Switch by David Warner
6. The Whisling Schoolboy and Other Stories by Ruskin Bond
7. Tombquest: Book of the Dead by Michael Northrop
8. Amulet: The Stonekeeper by Kazu Kibuishi
9. The Mug of Melancholy by Rohit Chakraborty
10. The Marsh Road Mysteries: Diamonds and Daggers by Elen Caldecott



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while regular columns on everyday technology concepts keep children up-to-date with the world around them. A subscription costs Rs. 650 for the year.

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