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Lord Ram's teachings of justice and non-discrimination gave solace and inspiration to indentured labourers in Fiji: Deputy Prime Minister Biman Prasad

Biman Prasad said the Fijians of Indian origin, especially of Hindu background, got rid of the caste system and established a more inclusive society because they were united to fight the 'brutal' system of indentured labour.

✍ Kallol Bhattacharje



The struggles and teachings of Lord Ram in exile as narrated by the Ramayana gave “solace and inspiration” to the girmitiyas or Indian indentured labourers of the 19th century who carried copies of the epic with them while travelling in ships, Fiji’s Deputy Prime Minister Biman Prasad said on Monday. Speaking to The Hindu in an exclusive chat, Mr. Prasad who has the additional ministerial portfolio of finance, strategic planning, national development and statistics, said the Fijians of Indian origin, especially of Hindu background, got rid of the caste system and established a more inclusive society because they were united to fight the “brutal” system of indentured labour.

“As indentured labourers during the years of hardship, Fijians of Indian origin, especially of Hindu background, got solace and inspiration from the Ramayana and the life of Lord Ram. The girmitiyas identified with the suffering of Lord Ram in forest and his return to Ayodhya after exile, as we read in the Ramayana, reflects the psychological yearning of the Indian diaspora in Fiji which is proud of its Fijian identity while acknowledging their origins,” said

Mr. Prasad explaining that the Ramayana also became a psychological connector between the modern day Fijians and their land of origin that their ancestors left behind in the late 19th century.

Mr. Prasad said Indians of Hindu, Muslim and Christian backgrounds went to Fiji carrying their holy texts and they went on to establish temples and Ramayana mandalis, mosques, markaz and churches and set up schools for their children that the colonial administration was unwilling to support. "Almost all the schools of Fiji were started by the Hindus, Muslims and Christians who came from India and we grew into a secular society because we understood that secularism does not mean absence of religion but giving equal space for everyone to practice their faith and as a result Diwali is celebrated by all citizens of my country," said Mr. Prasad.

To visit Ayodhya

Mr. Prasad is on a five-day visit to India during which he will meet with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and travel to Gujarat, Goa and Ayodhya where he is scheduled to attend a religious ceremony at the newly consecrated Shri Ram temple. He said that visiting Ayodhya as a pilgrimage had a very special meaning to the Fijians as it symbolises the return of the disinherited people to claim what rightfully belongs to them. The Fijians like Mr. Prasad were taught about the Ramayana by family and community members as passed on over the generations. "Every Fijian especially Hindus, knows the symbolic importance of Ayodhya and the teaching of non-discrimination and justice as exemplified in the life of Lord Ram as our ancestors not only sang the Ramayana they also established Ramayana mandalis that carried forward the teachings through the generations," Mr. Prasad said.

He said that the Ramayana mandalis were a unique community-driven practice that had survived in Fiji since they were started by the girmityas. "Depending on our work schedule, every Tuesday and Friday, Hindus in Fiji meet at our Ramayana mandalis. We have hundreds of Ramayana mandalis in Fiji and these sessions are supported by dholak, tabla and other musical instruments," Mr. Prasad said, presenting a unique diaspora tradition.

The Fijians of Indian background had a sense of yearning for India as they wanted to retain that special bond with the country while they were staunch believers in their Fijian identity based on non-discrimination on caste or religious basis. "While travelling in ship, Indian men and women became 'jahajibhais' (ship brothers) and 'jahajibahens' (ships sisters) and caste and religion were no longer the point of reference for the Indians who came as indentured labourers as they were united in fighting a brutal unjust system," Mr. Prasad said.

Elimination of the caste system within the Indian-origin Fijians was an "evolution" of the Hindus in the island nation that they built in Fiji and which as a result became more equitable, he said.

Diaspora Research and Resource Centre of Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad hosted 72nd KIP delegates at Pravasi Bhavan



On January 31, 2023, the Diaspora Research and Resource Centre (DRRC) - Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP) organized a workshop and interactive session to felicitate 72nd Know India Program (KIP) delegates, aggregating 40 from eleven countries including Fiji, Guyana, Malaysia, Mauritius, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Myanmar, and South Africa at Pravasi Bhavan.

Prof. Gopal Arora, Secretary of the ARSP, conveyed appreciation to the Ministry of External Affairs for extending an opportunity to welcome and engage with the KIP delegates. During his address, he provided a comprehensive visual and auditory journey through the rich history of ARSP and its affiliated organization, the DRRC, along with elucidating their guiding motto. He underscored the significance of the ARSP slogan, 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (The World Is One Family), emphasizing its profound ethos. Grounded in the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', DRRC-ARSP actively fosters connections and interactions with the Indian diaspora through a diverse array of events, spanning both virtual platforms and physical gatherings.

Dr. Swadesh Singh, Associate Professor at the University of Delhi, addressed delegates focusing on his latest literary work, "Ram Mandir: Bharat's Quest for Ram-Rajya". He highlighted the supreme significance of the Ayodhya Ram Temple, particularly among the Indian Diaspora. Dr. Singh eloquently illuminated Lord Ram's timeless symbolism, representing righteousness and justice ingrained in Indian civilization. His narrative explored Lord Ram's global resonance beyond geographical boundaries. "Ram Mandir: Bharat's Quest for Ram-Rajya" intricately details Ayodhya's transformation with the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple's construction, chronicling a 500-year-long struggle culminating in its judicial resolution in 2019. It portrays Ayodhya's evolution into an international tourist destination, symbolizing peace and prosperity, free from conflict—a testament to its rejuvenated identity. Through meticulous research, Dr. Singh's work draws parallels between India's narrative and its global significance, encapsulating Ayodhya's journey with newfound vigor.

Ms. Priyanka Sharma, a student at the Institute of Development Studies in the UK, presented a captivating workshop titled 'Divine Governance: Rama's Leadership Paradigm' with the focus on distinctive

facets of Lord Ram. Delving into the profound significance of the Ramayana, Ms. Sharma explored themes of leadership, diplomacy, equality, and justice. She also commenced a quiz on varied valuable lessons of Ramayana that invoked the intriguing and interactive engagement with the delegates. The participants who won the quiz were awarded with books and mementos. The workshop left delegates enriched and connected.

Dr. Markande Rai, a distinguished Senior Advisor at UN-HABITAT and ARSP's esteemed member, delved into profound aspects of the Ramayana, emphasizing its timeless relevance to human life. He underscored the epic's teachings on familial bonds, respect, and community responsibility. Dr. Rai highlighted understanding India as grasping its soul, urging reflection on Indian identity and pride, resonating with the ethos of the Know India Program (KIP). He urged participants to become ambassadors, carrying India's essence back to their countries. Dr. Rai's address emphasized the Ramayana's enduring wisdom and the transformative potential of cultural exchange for fostering global understanding and harmony.

H. E. Dr. Roger Gopaul, High Commissioner of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in his address, shared a poignant moment from his experience. He recounted witnessing Prime Minister Modi's entrance into Parliament, which prompted the assembly to rise and exclaim 'Jai Sri Ram'. Dr. Gopaul expressed awe at this symbolic gesture, noting its resonance in the world's largest democracy. Reflecting on his journey to India, he admitted his prior knowledge was shaped by Bollywood to some extent. However, upon arrival, he questioned which India he had come to see, recognizing its diversity and long history. Dr. Gopaul emphasized the importance of acknowledging India's civilization, culture, and philosophy, from ancient civilizations to digital innovation. He urged pride in the connection to India's heritage, woven into humanity's collective narrative.

Mr. Henry Rist of High Commission of the Republic of Guyana praised ARSP for successfully conducting KIP program. Mr. Rist shared the historical narrative of the Indian diaspora in Guyana and their contributions, highlighting significance of festivals like Deepawali, Phagwa, Eid, and Chiasmas. He admired India's gift of diversity, shaping Guyanese society positively. Mr. Rist emphasized India-Guyana strong diplomatic relations, praising collaborative efforts in agriculture, technology, education, health, and sports. He saw the KIP program as crucial for connecting Guyanese youth with India and the world, offering a deep understanding of Indian culture and encouraging cross-cultural exchange. Mr. Rist's address underscored the importance of such programs in strengthening bilateral ties and mutual appreciation.

Ms. Koentala Hardwarsingh, a distinguished diplomat from the Embassy of the Republic of Suriname, passionately urged the participants to delve into the intricate tapestry of Indian developmental processes, exploring both the opportunities they present and the challenges they entail. Emphasizing the importance of fostering people-to-people connections, she encouraged KIP participants to utilize this platform as a cornerstone for engaging with diaspora youth, underscoring their significance in nurturing robust bilateral relations between countries. Miss Hardwarsingh highlighted KIP's invaluable role in facilitating engagement and deepening connections with India. Addressing the KIP delegates in Hindi, she delved into discussions about culture and spirituality (Adhyatm), offering insights to comprehend India's essence at diverse levels.

Mr. Elia Sevutia, Second Secretary at the Embassy of the Republic of Fiji, enthusiastically encouraged participants of the Know India Program (KIP) to consider this platform as the initial step towards developing connections with youth diaspora. He emphasized the pivotal role of seizing this opportunity to engage with and cultivate relationships within India. Mr. Sevutia elaborated on the diplomatic and bilateral ties between Fiji and India across various sectors. Furthermore, he urged participants to actively promote awareness of the program, intending to extend its benefits to

a broader spectrum of youth diaspora. Additionally, he underscored the dynamic and evolving nature of the relationship between India and Fiji.

Dialogue with 72nd KIP Delegates

During a captivating session with KIP delegates, Mr. Gopal Arora nurtured an atmosphere of open dialogue, urging delegates to share their diverse experiences. The ensuing discussion was lively, with participants offering insightful perspectives on their experiences and observations in India, spanning cultural intricacies, advancements in Ayurveda, Yoga, and technology, and socioeconomic development. Delegates expressed admiration for India's multifaceted progress, highlighting the significance of their visit in reconnecting with their cultural roots and witnessing India's advancements firsthand. Fond discussions on traditional rituals like *Nazar-utarna* underscored shared cultural practices. There was palpable admiration for India's achievements in economic growth, education, technology, and women's empowerment. Culinary experiences were fondly shared, emphasizing the lasting impact of their stay in India. The interaction exemplified the profound influence of cultural exchange, fostering deeper connections and mutual broader understanding.



Dr. Ram, a distinguished member of ARSP, graciously shared his rich experiences of residing in Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji, and Suriname with the esteemed KIP delegates. His enlightening discourse captures the intricacies of cultural and religious practices within these Caribbean nations, with a particular emphasis on Suriname.

Dr. Ram ardently advocated for deeper understanding of India, underscoring its rapid growth and burgeoning connections with diasporic communities worldwide. He urged KIP delegates to seize this remarkable opportunity to foster stronger bonds between their respective countries and India, thereby facilitating greater collaboration and mutual understanding.

Shri Narayan Kumar, Honorary Director (ARSP), eloquently recounted his enriching experiences from his visits to various diaspora countries. During his addresses, he delved into the pivotal role of language, culture, and the vibrant tapestry of traditions, including the captivating melodies of Chatani Sangeet and Baithak Geet. With heartfelt gratitude, he extended his appreciation to the Indian diaspora for their remarkable contributions worldwide. He expressed profound thanks to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), esteemed dignitaries, guests, and the 72nd Know India Programme (KIP) delegates, whose presence ensured the success of the event. The ceremony culminated with a warm vote of thanks and the presentation of certificates to the KIP participants, recognizing their fervent participation and interesting interaction.

Role of diaspora in furthering India's religious nationalism globally

India's adept use of diaspora engagement as a tool for global legitimacy showcases the intricate interplay between domestic religious nationalism and international outreach.

✍️ Arkoprabho Hazra

Manager at Aakhya India

The celebratory atmosphere that engulfed India following the consecration ceremony of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya on January 22 was met with mixed reactions, particularly regarding its implications for India's minorities under the current Bharatiya Janata (BJP)-led government. This article seeks to delve into the foreign policy dimension, examining how India strategically employed diaspora engagement as a critical tool to garner global legitimacy for its brand of religious nationalism.

A pivotal aspect of this legitimisation lies in the directives issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to its various missions, instructing them to organise events tied to the consecration ceremony. These events not only actively engaged the Indian diaspora, but also attracted participation from foreign ministers and industrialists, lending a voice of international legitimacy to the Indian government's perspective. Notably, this outreach extended beyond neighbouring countries with shared cultural heritage linked to Ram. For instance, in New Zealand, Minister of Ethnic Communities Melissa Lee and Minister for Regulation David Seymour attended the Pran Pratishtha ceremony hosted by the Indian consulate in Auckland.

This global outreach underscores the government's effort to project its religious nationalism as a global phenomenon, garnering support from various quarters.

Furthermore, in the lead-up to the inauguration of the Ram temple, newly-elected Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Mohan Yadav said, "If God wishes, 'Akhand Bharat' will be formed again, if not today, then tomorrow; not only up to Sindh or Punjab but even till Afghanistan." He also added that the Ram temple is the first step towards a Ram Rajya and a possible recovery from the losses made by India after Partition in 1947. This statement by Yadav reaffirms Madhya Pradesh BJP President V D Sharma's speech wherein he outlined that if given a chance, the saffron party will change India's geography.

Such statements from crucial stakeholders within the ruling party bounds a parallel between India's religious nationalism and Israel's Zionism — Jewish religious movement for a Jewish national state in Palestine. Unlike India, Israel does not find its diaspora upholding the Zionist viewpoint on a global scale as seen recently when several Jewish bodies condemned actions of Jewish settlers in the West Bank.

This lack of global support by its diaspora and governments across the world for the Zionist outlook resulted in the UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/3379 which determined Zionism as a form of racism and racial discrimination. On the other end, India's Hindutva which is central to the country's religious nationalism has also been termed as 'racist supremacism', yet India manages to cleverly camouflage its religious nationalism under the blanket of cultural tolerance and evading the similar level of scrutiny faced by Zionism.

Moreover, Hindu religious organisations with international presence such as Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) play a key role in taking forward India's religious outlook in foreign soil. The BAPS temple to be inaugurated in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on February 14 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a key example. BAPS, over the years has built several temples across the world, including Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Building a temple in a Muslim-majority State has been termed by the UAE ambassador to India as a milestone for religious tolerance; however, looking at the situation within India and how sections of religiously-

charged communities in the country treat minority populations, we need to rethink whether India's religious nationalism is truly based on tolerance.

There is an innate relationship between the presence of large Indian diaspora and Hindu temples being built abroad, to cater the religious needs of the Indian population overseas. Thus, the Indian diaspora and internationally present Hindu religious organisations have played the key role of preventing global criticism on the adverse impacts of India's religious nationalism and statements on 'Akhand Bharat' across the public sphere, and within forums such as the UN Human Rights Council, adding another element to India's saffronisation of its foreign policy.

India's adept use of diaspora engagement as a tool for global legitimacy showcases the intricate interplay between domestic religious nationalism and international outreach. As India navigates this delicate balance, it remains to be seen how the world views the nation's brand of religious identity on the global stage in the coming years.

Courtesy: Deccan Herald, Dated: 05 February 2024

British-Indian Doctor Spearheads Cancer Vaccine Trial for Early Bowel Cancer

In a significant stride towards combating early bowel cancer, Dr. Tony Dhillon, a distinguished British-Indian medical oncologist, has taken the helm as the chief investigator in a pioneering vaccine trial. This groundbreaking initiative, a result of a fruitful collaboration between the United Kingdom and Australia, promises hope for patients worldwide.

Dr. Dhillon, currently serving as a consultant medical oncologist at the esteemed Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust, has long been dedicated to advancing cancer treatment. His vision for this trial, aimed at addressing early-stage bowel cancer, marks a significant milestone in the fight against this prevalent disease.

Collaborating closely with Professor Tim Price in Australia over the past four years, Dr. Dhillon has played a pivotal role in the development of this innovative vaccine. The trial's inception underscores the power of international cooperation and the tireless efforts of medical professionals dedicated to improving patient outcomes.

This vaccine trial represents a ray of hope for individuals grappling with early-stage bowel cancer, offering a potential avenue for more effective treatment options. As the trial commences, the medical community eagerly awaits the outcomes, recognizing the profound impact this research could have on cancer care worldwide.

Dr. Dhillon's leadership and dedication to advancing cancer treatment exemplify the spirit of innovation and collaboration driving medical progress. His pioneering efforts stand as a testament to the transformative potential of medical research in the fight against cancer.

UK museum awarded £2,00,000 grant to mark legacy of last Sikh ruler Maharaja Duleep Singh



Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last ruler of the Sikh empire

In a bid to commemorate the profound legacy of Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last ruler of the Sikh empire, the Ancient House Museum in Norfolk's Thetford has been granted a significant sum of nearly £200,000 by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Established in 1924 by Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, son of Maharaja Duleep Singh, the museum stands as a testament to the enduring history of the Duleep Singh family. The recent grant, coinciding with the museum's centenary, aims to enrich the museum's displays, allowing visitors to delve into the captivating narrative of this illustrious lineage.

Maharaja Duleep Singh's narrative is one of both grandeur and adversity. As the youngest son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, founder of the Sikh empire, Duleep Singh ascended to the throne at the tender age of five, only to be dethroned following the annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849. His subsequent journey led him to England, where he eventually settled at Elveden Hall in Suffolk, laying the foundation for a century-long connection between his family and the region.

Prince Frederick's gesture of donating the Ancient House Museum to the community underscores the family's commitment to preserving their heritage. Through the grant, the museum embarks on a two-year project to illuminate the multifaceted history of the Duleep Singh family.

Robyn Llewellyn, Director of England, Midlands, and East for the National Lottery Heritage Fund, expressed enthusiasm for the project, emphasizing its role in showcasing the rich tapestry of Anglo-Punjab history. Among the anticipated displays are a recreation of Elveden Hall, a loaned portrait of Duleep Singh, and exhibits highlighting the family's advocacy for universal suffrage.

Notably, the museum will also feature personal artifacts belonging to Maharaja Duleep Singh, including his cherished walking stick gifted to him by King Edward VII during his time as Prince of Wales.

With this grant, the Ancient House Museum sets out on a mission to not only commemorate the remarkable legacy of Maharaja Duleep Singh but also to celebrate the enduring contributions of the Duleep Singh family to the cultural landscape of the United Kingdom.

Indian Diaspora Illuminates Times Square with Celebration of Ram Temple Pran Prathistha Ceremony



In a vibrant display of cultural pride and unity, the Indian diaspora in New York adorned Times Square with the image of Lord Ram, chanting Shree Ram bhajans and songs as they celebrated the Pran Prathistha ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, India.

The streets of Times Square were aglow with the fervor of the Indian community, who turned out in large numbers donning traditional attire and waving saffron flags bearing portraits of Shri Ram. Their passionate renditions of bhajans and songs echoed through the iconic location, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of their homeland.

The Indian Embassy in the UK, speaking through X, lauded the spectacle, emphasizing the vibrancy and unity displayed by the diaspora in honoring the historic occasion. Meanwhile, Mayor Joe Petty of Worcester, Massachusetts, extended warm greetings to the Hindu community, recognizing the significance of the Pran Prathistha ceremony and commemorating India's 75th Republic Day.

The mayor's proclamation underscored the importance of inclusivity, extending congratulations to Hindu, Sikh, Jain, and Asian-American communities and acknowledging the efforts of the Foundation of Indian-Americans (FIA), New England, in facilitating the celebrations.

Joined by the US-India community, Mayor Petty reiterated the values of democracy, diversity, and unity, emphasizing the rich cultural heritage and traditions shared between the two nations.

Ahead of the 'Pran Prathistha' ceremony, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust announced a grand musical event titled 'Mangal Dhvani,' featuring renowned artists and set to captivate audiences at 10 am.

The illuminated festivities in Times Square stand as a testament to the enduring cultural bond between India and its diaspora, echoing the sentiments of joy and celebration surrounding the historic inauguration of the Shri Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Indian-American Prodigy Preesha Chakraborty Shines in 'World's Brightest Students' List



In a dazzling display of intellect and talent, nine-year-old Indian-American prodigy Preesha Chakraborty has claimed her spot among the world's brightest students. Hailing from Warm Spring Elementary School in Fremont, California, Preesha has been recognized by the esteemed Johns Hopkins Centre for Talented Youth (JH-CTY).

The announcement comes as no surprise to those familiar with Preesha's exceptional abilities. Outshining over 16,000 students from 90 countries, she has demonstrated an unparalleled aptitude and dedication to academic excellence.

The selection process was rigorous, with Preesha excelling in above-grade-level tests administered by the JH-CTY. Her remarkable achievement underscores not only her own brilliance but also the support and guidance she receives from her school and family.

Reflecting on her accomplishments, Preesha humbly attributes her success to hard work and a passion for learning. She serves as an inspiration to young minds worldwide, proving that age is no barrier to achieving greatness.

As Preesha takes her place among the world's brightest students, she continues to illuminate the path for future generations, showcasing the boundless potential within each individual. Congratulations to Preesha Chakraborty on this extraordinary achievement!

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni hails Indian diaspora's contribution



Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has expressed gratitude towards the significant contributions made by the South Asian community, particularly the Indian diaspora, to the nation's economy. Speaking during the 19th Summit of

the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) held in Kampala from January 15-20, President Museveni acknowledged the enduring resilience of the South Asian community despite facing adversities, notably the mass expulsion in 1972.

Former military ruler Idi Amin's decision to forcibly expel Asians, predominantly of Indian origin, from Uganda marked a dark chapter in the nation's history. However, President Museveni reflected on these past mistakes, emphasizing the vital role played by the Indian diaspora in Uganda's economic development.

Uganda's affiliation with the Non-Aligned Movement dates back to 1964 when it was admitted during the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Cairo. During Amin's tenure as the third president of Uganda from 1971 to 1979, the country faced tumultuous times, including the expulsion of thousands of Asians.

President Museveni's remarks underscore a shift in Uganda's stance towards embracing diversity and recognizing the invaluable contributions of all communities towards the nation's progress. As Uganda continues to strengthen its ties with the international community through forums like the Non-Aligned Movement, President Museveni's acknowledgment serves as a testament to the importance of inclusivity and unity in fostering sustainable development and prosperity for all.

Indian-Origin Lawyer Giridharan Sivaraman Appointed as Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner



In a landmark decision, Giridharan Sivaraman, a prominent Indian-origin lawyer, has been chosen as Australia's new Race Discrimination Commissioner by the Australian Human Rights Commission. With his appointment, Sivaraman assumes the pivotal role of combating racial discrimination and fostering harmony within Australian society.

As the Chair of Multicultural Australia and the head of Maurice Blackburn's Queensland Employment Law department, Sivaraman brings extensive experience and a deep understanding of legal intricacies to his new position. His background underscores a commitment to advocating for marginalized communities and promoting inclusivity.

The Race Discrimination Commissioner holds a critical mandate to address all forms of racial discrimination and advance tolerance across various sectors of Australian society. Sivaraman's appointment is poised to energize efforts towards achieving these objectives, signaling a progressive step forward in Australia's pursuit of equality and social cohesion.

Sivaraman's expertise and dedication are expected to contribute significantly to the ongoing discourse on diversity and inclusion, steering Australia towards a more equitable and harmonious future. His appointment underscores the country's commitment to fostering a society where every individual is valued and respected regardless of their background.

Film 'American Sikh' Qualifies for Oscars, Revolutionizing Sikh Cinema

In a groundbreaking moment in Oscar history, 'American Sikh,' a stirring animated film, has secured qualification for the prestigious Oscars, marking a seismic shift in Sikh representation in cinema. The International Sikh Film Festival 2023 witnessed the global embrace of this historic moment as the first Sikh animated movie blazed its trail towards the Oscars.

Directed by Ryan Westra and Vishavjit Singh, 'American Sikh' chronicles Singh's remarkable journey from an engineer-turned-cartoonist to an educator-activist combating hate and bias by donning the uniform of Marvel superhero Captain America. Executive producers Vikas Khanna and Guneet Monga Kapoor, won the 2023 Oscar for 'The Elephant Whisperers.' This inspirational ten-minute documentary promises to captivate audiences with its poignant narrative.

Vikas Khanna, known for his culinary mastery and cultural advocacy, joins forces once again to celebrate 'American Sikh,' solidifying the impact of Sikh stories globally. Khanna's collaboration echoes his commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion in storytelling.

The film also highlights 'Baywatana,' directed by Boston's talented high school students, which delves into the experiences of Sikh and Hindu families, enriching the tapestry of cultural narratives.

Vishavjit Singh's journey, from facing prejudice and violence as a turban-wearing Sikh boy to becoming a symbol of resilience and empowerment, resonates deeply with audiences worldwide. His collaboration with Ryan Westra underscores the importance of amplifying marginalized voices in mainstream media.

In an interview, Ryan Westra shared his motivation behind bringing Singh's story to life, emphasizing the need to shed light on the impact of childhood trauma and racism on health outcomes within the South Asian community.

As the global community celebrates the unstoppable rise of Sikh stories on the world stage, 'American Sikh' stands as a testament to resilience, diversity, and the power of storytelling to inspire change.

Stay tuned for more updates as 'American Sikh' continues its journey towards the Oscars, ushering in a new era of representation in cinema.

Courtesy: The Hindu, Dated: 05 February 2024

Indonesia-India Business Forum 2024 Strengthens Economic Ties Amidst 75 Years of Diplomatic Relations



MoS External Affairs Rajkumar Ranjan Singh at the Indonesia-India Business Forum 2024 in Jakarta

The Indonesia-India Business Forum 2024, a pivotal event aimed at bolstering economic ties between the two nations, recently concluded in Jakarta. Hosted by the Embassy of India in Jakarta in collaboration with the Indonesia India Business Forum (IIBF), the forum commemorated 75 years of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and India.

A key highlight of the event was the participation of Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs and for Education of India, who expressed enthusiasm about the prospects for expanded trade and investment between the two countries. Minister Singh remarked on the importance of trade as a cornerstone of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Indonesia and India.

The forum, held on Wednesday, January 31, 2024, featured in-depth discussions on economic integration and the identification of new avenues for bilateral trade and investment. A joint logo marking the 75 years of India-Indonesia diplomatic relations was launched, underscoring the significance of this milestone.

Indonesia has emerged as India's second-largest trading partner in the ASEAN region, with robust bilateral trade and increasing Indian investments. Official data indicates significant Indian investment in various sectors such as infrastructure, power, textiles, steel, automotive, mining, banking, and consumer goods.

Discussions at the IIBF centered on overcoming barriers to trade and investment, with a focus on enhancing the Indian presence in the Indonesian market. The event convened a distinguished audience comprising business leaders, policymakers, and industry experts, fostering high-level dialogue on the future of Indonesia-India economic relations. One of the forum's highlights was an interactive panel discussion addressing local currency settlement systems, banking, and digital finance, showcasing opportunities for increased financial integration between the two nations. The panel featured esteemed figures from the banking and digital finance sectors of both countries, offering concrete strategies for enhanced economic cooperation.

The Indonesia-India Business Forum 2024 marks a significant step forward in bilateral relations, reinforcing collaboration and laying the groundwork for future economic partnerships. Established in 2022, the IIBF continues to facilitate interactions between the Indonesian and Indian business communities, driving exploration and implementation of new business opportunities.

As both nations look ahead, the forum's outcomes promise to foster greater synergy, innovation, and prosperity in the dynamic landscape of Indonesia-India economic relations.

India-Gulf people-to-people relations: A pivot to multidimensional ties between New Delhi and the Middle East

✍ Dr Prasanta Kumar Pradhan

India and the Arabian Peninsula have shared a historical and civilizational connection for the last 5000 years. Traders, travelers, and scholars from both sides have visited each other for centuries. This has resulted in a deep exchange of language, culture and ideas between the two. People used to cross the Arabian Sea on boats using the traditional knowledge of seasonal winds.

The spice trade between India and the Arabian Peninsula is well recorded in history. The Malabar Coast of Kerala and the Omani and Yemeni coasts were important ports of entry for the people. Such interactions of the past have continued in the modern times.

In the present context, much of the contact is dominated by the interaction between the respective governments. Today, India's relationship with the Gulf countries is multifaceted with strong economic, political, defence and security cooperation. India considers the region as its "extended neighbourhood" with huge stakes in these countries. In the interaction dominated by the governments, people-to-people contacts from both sides have continued and it constitutes an important aspect of the India-Gulf relationship.

There is a nine million strong Indian community working and living in the Gulf region. The oil boom in the Gulf region in the 1970s brought a large number of Indian manpower to work in the growing petroleum industry. That number has continued to grow over the decades, and today, Indians constitute the largest expatriate community in the Gulf. The semi-skilled, skilled, and high-skilled manpower from India contribute significantly to the development and progress of the Gulf economies.

In recent decades, the number of highly qualified professionals from India in the Gulf has grown significantly. The contribution of the Indian diaspora to the economic development of the Gulf countries has been acknowledged by the Gulf rulers. The Indian diaspora in the Gulf is known to be hardworking and law-abiding, and they have adapted themselves to the political and social environment in the Gulf. The presence of the Indian diaspora has left an enduring impression in the minds of the local population about India.

The Indian diaspora forms a natural link between India and the Gulf. It works as a bridge connecting the government and people on both sides. Commending the contribution of the Indian diaspora in the Gulf, Prime Minister Narendra Modi applauded them by stating that they are 'brand ambassadors' of India's culture and heritage.

A number of Indian traders and businessmen have been successful in establishing their businesses in the Gulf. This has helped not only in achieving commercial benefits but also in accelerating interaction at the societal level as well. Most of the Indians working in the Gulf send money to their families back home. India is the largest recipient of remittances in the world. In 2023, India received around US\$ 125 billion as remittances. About half of these remittances come from the Gulf region. Cultural interactions between India and the Gulf region have continued since the past. Language, art, culture, education and cinema are some of the most prominent means of cultural interaction between the two peoples.

In modern times, cultural exchange programmes are facilitated by governments by signing cultural exchange agreements to enhance knowledge of each other's culture on both sides. The governments promote cooperation between institutions, museums, artists, theatre organisations, exchange of officials, scholars and researchers from both sides. Today,

cinema remains a powerful medium of cultural interaction between both sides, especially among the young generation. While the Indian cinema industry has grown substantially, it is growing slowly in the Gulf with liberal policies adopted by the Gulf rulers. Indian movies, serials and actors are famous in the Gulf region as they have grown in popularity among the Arab youth.

While the Covid-19 pandemic was a difficult time for the Indian diaspora, they received support from the government and civil society organizations in the Gulf. The Indian government appealed to the Gulf rulers to look after the well-being of the Indian community during the difficult times of the pandemic.

Celebrating the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has been a platform for the Indian diaspora to come together every year and discuss the issues concerning them. This helps the Indian diaspora from all over the globe in networking and sharing their experiences among themselves. The Government of India has been engaging with the diaspora communities from different parts of the world through this format.

People-to-people contact is one of the key elements of bilateral relations between India and the Gulf region. This is an effective 'soft power' in the times of real politics and interest-driven policies of the nation-states.

In modern times, the increased use of communication technology and ease of movement of people from both sides has further facilitated people-to-people interaction.

This could be used as a tool by the governments to further strengthen their relations. The challenges in this way must be addressed jointly by the respective governments, involvement of Indian diaspora communities and civil society organisations from the Gulf region. That is a huge scope in further enhancing people-to-people contact between India and the Gulf region in future.

***The author is a Research Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi; views expressed are his own**

India's economy to reach \$10 trillion by 2030, predicts WEF President; stresses global collaboration amidst challenges

In a momentous declaration at the 54th annual World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in Davos, WEF President Borge Brende has forecasted that India's economy is poised to reach the USD 10 trillion milestone by the close of this decade. Speaking to Business Today's Executive Director Rahul Kanwal, Brende expressed unwavering confidence in India's economic trajectory, envisioning its ascent to the league of the world's foremost economies.

Brende underscored India's remarkable economic resilience amidst global headwinds and geopolitical tensions, citing its robust performance. He foresees a promising 8% growth rate for the current year, far surpassing the global trade growth rate, which dwindled to 0.8% last year from 3.4%. Despite challenges posed by escalating oil prices and the Israel-Hamas conflict, Brende remains bullish on India's economic prospects, attributing its buoyancy to the nation's burgeoning digital economy, which is expanding twice as fast as its counterparts worldwide.

In an interview with NDTV's Vishnu Som, Brende elucidated India's potential for exponential growth, likening it to a "snowball effect." He emphasized the pivotal role of sustained reforms, geopolitical stability, and investments in research and infrastructure in realizing India's ambitious economic objectives.

Amidst discussions on the global economic landscape, Brende offered insights into the future trajectories of key players, foreseeing a resurgence in the United States and China's economies. He also delved into the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on employment, advocating for its potential to elevate productivity and welfare, particularly in countries like India, while acknowledging its short-term displacement effects on certain job sectors.

In concluding remarks, Brende emphasized the imperative of fostering global collaboration and trust-building to confront contemporary challenges such as pandemics, climate change, and cyber threats. Against the backdrop of the WEF 2024 theme, "rebuilding trust in a fractured world," Brende underscored the indispensable need for international cooperation in addressing pressing global issues.

Over 59,000 Indians Acquired US Citizenship in 2023, Comprising 6.7% of Total New Citizens: USCIS Report

According to the annual progress report for 2023 released by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a staggering 59,000 Indians were granted US citizenship in the fiscal year 2023. This significant number propelled India to secure the second position as the top source country for new citizens in the United States, following Mexico.

The report disclosed that nearly 8.7 lakh foreign nationals were naturalized as US citizens during the fiscal year ending on September 30, 2023. Among them, over 1.1 lakh were Mexicans, constituting 12.7% of the total, while 6.7% were Indians, totaling 59,100 individuals.

Additionally, the report outlined that 44,800 new US citizens, comprising 5.1%, hailed from the Philippines, and 35,200, accounting for 4%, originated from the Dominican Republic.

Eligibility for naturalization, as per the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), mandates applicants to fulfill specific criteria, including being a lawful permanent resident (LPR) for a minimum of five years. Certain exceptions, such as spouses of US citizens and individuals with military service, are exempted from some naturalization prerequisites.

The majority of individuals who obtained US citizenship in FY 2023 were eligible based on being LPRs for at least five years (INA Section 316(a)). This was followed by applicants who qualified as LPRs for three years and were married to US citizens for three years (INA Section 319(a)), as well as applicants eligible due to military service during designated periods of hostilities (INA Section 329).

The report further highlighted that a non-citizen must typically spend a minimum of five years as an LPR to qualify for naturalization, whereas the spouse of a US citizen must spend at least three years as an LPR. The median duration of LPR status for all citizens naturalized in FY 2023 was seven years.

Moreover, the USCIS underscored that naturalizations during the fiscal years 2022 and 2023 accounted for nearly a quarter of all naturalizations over the past decade.

This surge in Indian citizens acquiring US citizenship underscores the enduring ties between the two nations and reflects the ongoing trend of skilled migration to the United States.

Suriname Parliamentary Delegation Meets Indian Counterparts, Strengthening Bilateral Ties



A significant diplomatic encounter unfolded as a Parliamentary Delegation from Suriname, spearheaded by the Chairman of the National Assembly of Suriname, Marinus Bee, engaged in discussions with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla at the Parliament House Complex.

Highlighting Friendship: Speaker Birla warmly welcomed the Delegation, emphasizing the deep-rooted friendly relations between India and Suriname, underscored by historical and cultural bonds. He reiterated the robust connections fostered through cultural, spiritual, and people-to-people exchanges.

Reciprocal Hospitality: Birla reminisced about the cordial reception extended to the Indian Parliamentary Delegation during their visit to Suriname in 2022, emphasizing the importance of such reciprocal gestures in nurturing bilateral relations.

Strengthening Bilateral Relations: Discussions extended to high-level visits, notably mentioning President Draupadi Murmu's trip to Suriname. Birla emphasized the significance of such exchanges in fortifying ties, citing the Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas Award conferred upon Suriname President Chan Santokhi as a testament to the close economic and cultural relations. **Multilateral Collaboration:** Both sides acknowledged the importance of cooperation at multilateral forums, aiming to tackle shared challenges and forge mutually beneficial solutions.

Celebrating Democracy: With India gearing up for General Elections, Birla portrayed the electoral process as a celebration of democracy, highlighting its transparency and inclusivity, with over 900 million voters participating.

India's Socioeconomic Progress: Birla briefed the Delegation on India's rapid socioeconomic transformation under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, emphasizing the country's contributions to global problem-solving through innovation and research. **Parliamentary Cooperation:** Stressing on strengthening parliamentary cooperation, discussions delved into various mutual interests, further solidifying the bond between India and Suriname.

Gratitude and Mutual Respect: Chairman Bee expressed gratitude for the warm reception, acknowledging India's significance as a cherished ally and "second home" for the Surinamese. **Broad Participation:** The gathering saw the presence of several Members of Parliament, signifying the collective commitment towards enhancing bilateral ties. The meeting between the Parliamentary Delegations of India and Suriname underscores the shared commitment to deepen cooperation across various spheres, promising a brighter future for both nations.

Third Offshore Campus of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) to Be Established in Sri Lanka



In a move set to enhance educational ties between India and Sri Lanka, sources indicate that the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) is poised to establish its third offshore campus in Sri Lanka. The proposal, initially unveiled in Sri Lanka's 2024 Budget by President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who also holds the finance minister portfolio, has gained momentum in recent discussions.

According to insider information, the Sri Lankan government has initiated dialogue with IIT Madras to materialize this ambitious project. Reports suggest that a high-level delegation recently visited the Chennai campus to deliberate on the prospective collaboration, with Kandy being earmarked as the likely location for the campus.

During their visit, the delegation also explored potential areas of engagement at the Research Park within the campus premises, indicating a comprehensive approach towards academic collaboration. Furthermore, in a bid to bolster educational exchange, the Indian government has announced plans to extend admission opportunities to meritorious Sri Lankan students in various IITs across India, starting from the 2017-18 academic sessions.

If the plan for the Sri Lankan campus comes to fruition, it will mark IIT Madras' second international campus, following the establishment of a campus in Tanzania's Zanzibar last year. Notably, Preeti Aghalyam's appointment as the director-in-charge of the Zanzibar campus made her the first woman to hold such a position in an IIT. Meanwhile, IIT Delhi has also entered the offshore campus arena by signing a formal agreement with the UAE government to establish a campus in Abu Dhabi. The inaugural Master's course at the IIT Delhi-Abu Dhabi campus will focus on energy transition and sustainability, aligning with the shared vision of both nations. Expanding its global footprint further, the United Kingdom has expressed interest in hosting an IIT offshore campus, with discussions already underway between UK universities and IITs to explore this possibility. Moreover, several Middle Eastern and South Asian countries have approached various IITs expressing interest in setting up campuses in their respective regions.

These developments underscore the growing demand for quality technical education worldwide and highlight the pivotal role that IITs play in fulfilling this demand while fostering international collaboration and knowledge exchange.

PM Modi Inaugurates BAPS Hindu Mandir in UAE, Hails “Landmark” Move



Prime Minister Narendra Modi marked a historic moment in Indo-UAE relations as he inaugurated the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday. The temple, representing the socio-spiritual Hindu faith rooted in the Vedas, stands as a testament to the enduring cultural ties between India and the United Arab Emirates. The journey towards the establishment of the Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi began during PM Modi’s first visit to the UAE in 2015. Following fruitful discussions, the UAE government allocated land for the construction of the BAPS temple, a move hailed by PM Modi as a “landmark” gesture. Expressing gratitude on behalf of 130 crore Indians, PM Modi extended heartfelt thanks to the leadership of the UAE for their support and cooperation in realizing this significant initiative.

The BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir holds special significance, symbolizing the rich spiritual heritage of India and fostering harmony among diverse communities. Rooted in the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the late 18th century and formally established in 1907 by Shastriji Maharaj, BAPS has served as a beacon of peace and goodwill.

Ahead of the temple’s opening ceremony, Sadhu Brahmaviharidas acknowledged the pivotal role played by the benevolence and camaraderie of leaders from the UAE. He conveyed profound gratitude to the rulers and officials of the UAE, underscoring the strong bond between Prime Minister Modi and the leadership of the UAE.

The inauguration of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir stands as a symbol of friendship, cultural exchange, and mutual respect between India and the UAE. It reinforces the commitment of both nations to promoting tolerance, understanding, and cooperation on the global stage.

The event was attended by dignitaries from India and the UAE, along with members of the Indian diaspora, who gathered to witness this historic moment. As the temple doors open to devotees, it is expected to emerge as a spiritual and cultural hub, fostering harmony and unity among people of all backgrounds. Inaugurating the BAPS Hindu Mandir, PM Modi emphasized the shared values of pluralism and diversity that bind India and the UAE together, envisioning a future of enhanced cooperation and prosperity for both nations and the world at large.

हिन्दुस्थान
Hindusthan

स्थापित - 1948



बहुभाषी न्यूज एजेंसी

समाचार
Samachar

परिचय

- ◆ हिन्दुस्थान समाचार भारत की पहली और वर्तमान तक एकमात्र बहुभाषी न्यूज एजेंसी है।
- ◆ 10 अप्रैल, 1948 को स्थापित।
- ◆ यह एक को-ऑपरेटिव सोसाइटी द्वारा संचालित है।
- ◆ इसका प्रशासनिक कार्यालय दिल्ली में है। देशभर में 21 ब्यूरो कार्यरत हैं।

हमारी ताकत

- ◆ देश भर में 600 स्थानों पर संवाद सूत्रों का बड़ा नेटवर्क। हिन्दुस्थान समाचार देश में सर्वाधिक ग्राहक संख्या वाली न्यूज एजेंसी है। हिन्दी, अंग्रेजी, उर्दू, बांग्ला, असमिया, ओडिया, मराठी, गुजराती, कन्नड़, तेलुगु, पंजाबी और नेपाली भाषा में सबसे प्रभावी न्यूज एजेंसी।
- ◆ मीडिया जगत में समाचारों और विचारों की प्रमुख और विश्वस्तनीय संवाद समिति।
- ◆ हिन्दुस्थान समाचार न्यूज एजेंसी दैनिक समाचार पत्रों, साप्ताहिक पत्रिकाओं, न्यूज बैनर्स व पोर्टल्स को त्वरित गति से समाचार उपलब्ध कराती है।
- ◆ देश के सर्वाधिक प्रसार संख्या वाले प्रतिष्ठित डीडी न्यूज और आकाशवाणी को भी प्रसार भारती के माध्यम से हिन्दुस्थान समाचार 12 भाषाओं की सेवा प्रदान करता है।

विविधता

- ◆ समाचार सेवा के साथ ही हिन्दुस्थान समाचार लेख व फ्रीचर सेवा, फोटो सेवा भी प्रदान करता है।
- ◆ आधुनिक प्रौद्योगिकी को ध्यान में रखते हुए हिन्दुस्थान समाचार न्यूज स्कैन सेवा का संचालन भी करता है।
- ◆ हिन्दुस्थान समाचार समूह के द्वारा युगवार्ता (प्रासंगिक), नवोत्थान (मासिक) का भी प्रकाशन किया जाता है।
- ◆ भारतीय नववर्ष (चैत्र शुक्ल प्रतिपदा) के अवसर पर प्रतिवर्ष हिन्दुस्थान समाचार द्वारा वैश्वीयता का प्रकाशन किया जाता है। इसमें भारतीय तिथि के साथ-साथ अंग्रेजी दिनांक भी होते हैं। भारतीय काल-क्रम पर आधारित यह वैश्वीयता बहुपयोगी है।
- ◆ समय-समय पर हिन्दुस्थान समाचार द्वारा वार्षिकी का भी प्रकाशन किया जाता है। यह प्रतिवर्ष की महत्वपूर्ण जानकारी समेटते हुए इतिहास की दृष्टि विकसित करने के लिए प्रतिष्ठित है।

मार्गदर्शक एवं लक्ष्य

- ◆ राष्ट्रीय विचारों के प्रखर तारकी (स्व.) शिवराम आप्टे उपाख्य दादा साहेब आप्टे ने इसकी स्थापना की।
- ◆ देवनागरी लिपि में 'टेलीप्रिन्टर' से समाचार भेजने का श्रेय इस एजेंसी के माध्यम से हमारे संस्थापक दादा साहेब आप्टे को जाता है।
- ◆ पत्रकारिता के लिए जीवन समर्पित करने के साथ ही भारतवासियों को राष्ट्रीय भाव-भूमि से जोड़ने वाले बालेश्वर अग्रवालजी (अब स्व.) के यशस्वी संपादन व प्रबंधन में हिन्दुस्थान समाचार देश की सबसे प्रामाणिक व प्रतिष्ठित न्यूज एजेंसी के रूप में स्थापित हुई।
- ◆ निर्भीक और निष्पक्ष पत्रकारिता के चलते हिन्दुस्थान समाचार एक सत्ता प्रतिष्ठान का कोपभाजन बना और इसका प्रवाह बाधित करने का निरंतर प्रयास किया गया।
- ◆ राष्ट्र कार्य के लिए समर्पित श्रीकांत जी जोशी (अब स्व.) ने हिन्दुस्थान समाचार को पुनरुज्जीवन प्रदान किया।
- ◆ हमारा लक्ष्य समाचारों का व्यापार करना नहीं बल्कि संवाद समिति को एक सामाजिक कार्य के रूप में खड़ा करना है।
- ◆ सत्य, संवाद, सेवा और सहकार के मूल मंत्र से प्रेरित।

हिन्दुस्थान समाचार का आधार
सत्य, संवाद, सेवा और सहकार

नवोत्थान नवोत्थान युगवार्ता वार्षिकी

मासिक पत्रिका

मासिक पत्रिका

मासिक पत्रिका

एम-6, भगत सिंह मार्केट, गोल मार्केट, नई दिल्ली - 110001

Bhutan News

India announces 15B INR concessional loan for Gyalsung Project

Source- Kuensel (KP Sharma)



The Government of India (GoI) has announced a concessional loan of 15 billion INR to support the Royal Government of Bhutan in the development of infrastructure for the Gyalsung Project.

The memorandum of understanding was signed by Dasho Chhewang Rinzin, interim advisor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, and Ambassador of India to Bhutan, Sudhakar Dalela, on 21st January 2024 in Thimphu.

This collaborative effort displays the strong diplomatic ties between the two nations and emphasises their commitment to fostering mutual growth and development, according to a press release from the Indian Embassy. The financial support of 15 billion INR is designated for the advancement of infrastructure associated with the Gyalsung project. “The financing arrangement will be in addition to the Government of India’s plan assistance to the Royal Government of Bhutan,” stated the press release.

The press release stated that it will build on the earlier collaboration between the Government of India and Gyalsung. The Government of India had extended a grant assistance of 2 billion INR for the DeSuung for Gyalsung programme in February, 2023.

Ambassador Sudhakar Dalela stated that India is privileged to partner with Bhutan on a landmark initiative of His Majesty The King, which puts youth and skill at the heart of nation-building efforts.

The Gyalsung, Bhutan’s National Service was announced by His Majesty The King during the Royal Address to the nation on the 112th National Day of Bhutan on December 17, 2019.

This national service represents a foundational duty that is mandatory for all Bhutanese citizens, as outlined in Article 8.1 of the Constitution. Accordingly, the Gyalsung Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan was officially adopted by the Parliament of Bhutan on November 11, 2022. Subsequently, the inaugural batch of Gyalsung Training is set to commence in September of this year.

His Majesty has envisioned the institution of Gyalsung as a means to empower all Bhutanese youth to participate in the process of nation-building to further enhance the security, peace, unity, harmony and sovereignty of our nation.

His Majesty confers Dakyen to Prime Minister, Speaker of National Assembly and Cabinet Ministers

Source: Bhutan Broadcasting Service (Sherub Dorji)



His Majesty The King conferred Dakyen to the new Prime Minister, Tshering Tobgay, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Lungten Dorji, and Cabinet Ministers in a ceremony held at the Golden Throne Room of the Tashichhodzong on 28th January 2024.

The cabinet ministers of the fourth democratically elected government of Bhutan are Mr. Younten Phuntsho, Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Mrs. Dimple Thapa, Minister of Education and Skills Development, Mr. Gem Tshering, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Mr. Lekey Dorji, Minister of Finance, Mr. Dinanath Dhungyel, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Mr. Tandin Wangchuk, Minister of Health, Mr. Tshering, Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Namgyal Dorji, Minister of Industry, Commerce and Employment, and Mr. Chandra Gurung, Minister of Infrastructure and Transport.

Days to Remember

in March, 2024

March 03	:	Bulgaria - National Day
March 06	:	Ghana-Independence Day
March 08	:	International Women's day
March 09	:	Amavasya
March 12	:	Mauritius - Republic Day
March 20	:	Tunisia - Independence Day
March 24	:	Purnima
March 25	:	Holi
March 26	:	Bangladesh - Independence Day

अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस : 21 फरवरी

अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस जानिए क्यों और किसकी याद में मनाया जाता है?



21 फरवरी को प्रतिवर्ष अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस (International Mother Language Day) के रूप में मनाया जाता है। इसका उद्देश्य भाषा विज्ञान के बारे में जागरूकता, सांस्कृतिक विविधता तथा बहुभाषावाद को बढ़ावा देना है। दरअसल, आम जीवन में भाषा एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाती है। यही वजह है कि यूनेस्को द्वारा हर साल 21 फरवरी को अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस को मनाया जाता है। मातृभाषा से आशय ऐसी भाषा से होता है, जिसे बच्चा पैदा होने के बाद अपनी मां या परिवार से सीखता है। यानि बच्चा जन्म के बाद जिस भाषा को सबसे पहले सीखता है, वहीं मातृभाषा कहलाती है। इस दिन को मनाने का उद्देश्य दुनियाभर के लोगों में अपनी भाषा और संस्कृति के प्रति रुझान पैदा करना और उन्हें इस बारे में जागरूक करना है। ताकि लोगों को अपनी मातृभाषा बोलने में गर्व की अनुभूति हो। तो चलिए जानते हैं कि मातृभाषा किसे कहते हैं? और अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस मनाने की शुरुआत कैसे हुई?

यूनेस्को हर साल निर्धारित करती है थीम

यूनेस्को हर साल अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस को वृहद स्तर पर और बेहतर ढंग से मनाए जाने को लेकर एक थीम निर्धारित करती है, जिसके तहत की कार्यक्रम आयोजित किए जाते हैं और उसे आगे बढ़ाया जाता है। इसी क्रम में साल 2023 के लिए यूनेस्को ने अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस मनाया जाने के लिए टीम भी निर्धारित कर दी है, जिसके तहत वर्तमान साल के लिए 'बहुभाषी शिक्षा-शिक्षा को बदलने की आवश्यकता' (Multilingual Education & A necessity to transform education) थीम निर्धारित की है।

21 फरवरी को क्यों मनाया जाता है अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस

21 फरवरी को अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस मनाए जाने की घोषणा यूनेस्को ने 17 नवंबर 1999 में की थी। जिसके बाद पहली बार 21 फरवरी 2000 को वैश्विक स्तर पर अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस के रूप में मनाया गया। दरअसल, कनाडा के रहने वाले बांग्लादेशी रफीकुल इस्लाम ने बांग्ला भाषा आंदोलन के दौरान ढाका में 1952 में हुए नृशंस हत्याओं को स्मरण करने के लिए इस दिवस को मानने के लिए 21 फरवरी के दिन को चुनने का सुझाव दिया था। जिसके बाद से ही हर साल 21 फरवरी को अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस को मनाया जाता है।

मातृभाषा किसे कहते हैं?

दरअसल मातृभाषा से आशय ऐसी भाषा से होता है, जिसे बच्चा पैदा होने के बाद अपनी मां या परिवार से सीखता है। यानि बच्चा जन्म के बाद जिस भाषा को सबसे पहले सीखता है, वही मातृभाषा कहलाती है। मातृभाषा के जरिए ही हम अपनी संस्कृति या धरोहर से जुड़ते हैं। किसी भी व्यक्ति के लिए अपनी मातृभाषा का ज्ञान होना बहुत आवश्यक है।

भारत में कितनी मातृभाषा?

साल 2011 की जनगणना रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत में मातृभाषाओं की कुल संख्या 19 हजार से अधिक है। हालांकि इसमें से 121 भाषाएं ऐसी हैं, जिन्हें 10 हजार से अधिक लोग बोलते हैं। इस दौरान यह भी सामने आया है कि एक घर के सदस्यों की मातृभाषा अलग-अलग हो सकती है।

हिंदी सबसे ज्यादा बोली जाने वाली मातृभाषा :

साल 2011 की जनगणना रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत में 43.63 फीसदी लोग हिंदी को अपनी मातृभाषा मानते हैं। इसके बाद दूसरे नंबर पर बंगला और तीसरे नंबर पर मराठी भाषा सबसे अधिक बोली जाती है। वहीं अगर गैर सूचीबद्ध भाषाओं की बात करे तो राजस्थान में बोली जाने वाली भीली इस सूची में पहले जबकि गोंडी भाषा दूसरे नंबर पर आती है।

'बहुभाषी शिक्षा है पीढ़ीगत शिक्षा का आधार' थीम के साथ मनाया जा रहा है इस बार का अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मातृभाषा दिवस। यूनेस्को की तरफ से कहा गया है कि स्थायी समाज के लिए सांस्कृतिक व भाषाई विविधता जरूरी है। शांति की स्थापना के लिए यह जरूरी है कि संस्कृतियों और भाषाओं में अंतर को संरक्षित करें जो दूसरों के प्रति सहिष्णुता और सम्मान को बढ़ावा देता है।

मॉरीशस में महर्षि दयानंद सरस्वती की 200वीं जयंती



मॉरीशस में महर्षि दयानंद सरस्वती की 200वीं जयंती के उपलक्ष में आर्य सभा, मॉरीशस द्वारा आयोजित भव्य अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय महासम्मेलन एवं शैक्षिक सत्रों का उद्घाटन मॉरीशस के माननीय प्रधानमंत्री श्री प्रवीण कुमार जगन्नाथ ने किया। इस कार्यक्रम के विशिष्ट अतिथि श्री संतोष चौबे, कुलाधिपति, रबींद्रनाथ टैगोर विश्वविद्यालय एवं निदेशक विश्व रंग ने बीज वक्तव्य प्रस्तुत किया। कार्यक्रम में मॉरीशस की प्रधानमंत्री श्रीमती लीला देवी दुकन, मॉरीशस सरकार के अनेक मंत्रीगण, मॉरीशस में भारत की उच्चायुक्त श्रीमती नंदनी सिंगला, यूके से श्रीमती अरुणा अजीजसरिया ऑस्ट्रेलिया से श्रीमती मृदुल कीर्ति, केन्या से श्री राजकुमार सैनी आदि की विशेष उपस्थिति रही। इस अवसर पर कुलाधिपति श्री चौबे ने माननीय प्रधानमंत्री एवं उप प्रधानमंत्री महोदयों को अपनी पुस्तक एवं विश्वरंग पुस्तिका भेंट की। कार्यक्रम के प्रथम शिक्षण सत्र की अध्यक्षता भी श्री संतोष चौबे ने की। द्वितीय शैक्षिक सत्र में डॉ. जवाहर कर्णावट, सलाहकार प्रवासी भारतीय साहित्य एवं संस्कृति शोध केंद्र ने 'विष्व में हिंदी के प्रचार प्रसार में आर्य समाज का योगदान' विषय पर अपने विचार व्यक्त किए। मॉरीशस के स्पोर्ट्स कांप्लेक्स में आयोजित समारोह में देश-विदेश के लगभग 3000 से अधिक महानुभाव उपस्थित रहे।

दक्षिण पूर्व एशिया के देशों का अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय हिंदी सम्मेलन



दक्षिण पूर्व एशिया के देशों का अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय हिंदी सम्मेलन (2 से 4 फरवरी 2024) का शुभारंभ टोक्यो यूनिवर्सिटी आफ फॉरेन स्टडीज के तत्वावधान में टोक्यो स्थित भारतीय दूतावास के सभागृह में हुआ। जापान के भारतीय राजदूत श्री सिबी जॉर्ज के मुख्य आतिथ्य में आयोजित समारोह में विदेश मंत्रालय के संयुक्त सचिव श्री जायसवाल, विश्वविद्यालय की अध्यक्ष प्रो. कायोको हयाशी, हिंदी विभाग अध्यक्ष प्रो. योशिफुमि मिजुनो, प्रो. तोमियो मिजोकामि आदि भी विशेष रूप से उपस्थित रहे। इस अवसर पर सम्मेलन स्मारिका तथा प्रोफेसर हिदेआकि इशिदा के संपादन में प्रकाशित पत्रिका 'हिंदी साहित्य' का लोकार्पण भी हुआ। विद्यार्थियों ने हिंदी नाटिका तथा गीत प्रस्तुत किए। सम्मेलन में जापान, दक्षिण कोरिया, वियतनाम, भारत आदि देशों के प्रतिनिधियों की भागीदारी रही। 13 फरवरी को टोक्यो यूनिवर्सिटी आफ फॉरेन स्टडीज में दक्षिण पूर्व मध्य एशिया के देशों में हिंदी भाषा एवं शिक्षण पर विस्तार से चर्चा हुई। सम्मेलन का संयोजन विश्वविद्यालय के प्राध्यापक प्रो.सूरज प्रकाश बडत्या ने किया।



केदारनाथ अग्रवाल
(01 अप्रैल 1911 – 22 जून 2000)

केदारनाथ अग्रवाल हिन्दी के प्रमुख कवि थे। 1 अप्रैल 1911 को उत्तर प्रदेश के बांदा जनपद में हुआ था। केदार जी के पिताजी स्वयं कवि थे और उनका एक काव्य संकलन 'मधुरिम' के नाम से प्रकाशित भी हुआ था। तदनंतर अपने चाचा मुकुंदलाल अग्रवाल के संरक्षण में उन्होंने शिक्षा पाई। इलाहाबाद में बी.ए. की उपाधि हासिल करने के पश्चात् कानूनी शिक्षा उन्होंने कानपुर में हासिल की तत्पश्चात् वहीं वकालत करने लगे थे।

केदारनाथ अग्रवाल का इलाहाबाद से गहरा रिश्ता था। इलाहाबाद विश्वविद्यालय में अध्ययन के दौरान ही उन्होंने कविताएँ लिखने की शुरुआत की। उनकी लेखनी में प्रयाग की प्रेरणा का बड़ा योगदान रहा है। उनकी सभी मुख्य कृतियाँ इलाहाबाद के परिमल प्रकाशन से ही प्रकाशित हुईं। परिमल प्रकाशन का लोगो भी केदारनाथ अग्रवाल के चित्र का ही बनाया गया। केदारनाथ अग्रवाल ने मार्क्सवादी दर्शन को जीवन का आधार मानकर जनसाधारण के जीवन की गहरी व व्यापक संवेदना को अपने कवियों में मुखरित किया है। केदारनाथ अग्रवाल की कविताओं का अनुवाद रूसी, जर्मन, चेक और अंग्रेज़ी में हुआ है। केदारनाथ अग्रवाल का पहला काव्य-संग्रह युग की गंगा आज़ादी के पहले मार्च, 1947 में प्रकाशित हुआ।

हवा हूँ हवा, मैं बसंती हवा हूँ!

हवा हूँ हवा, मैं बसंती हवा हूँ!
वही हॉ, वही जो युगों से गगन को
बिना कष्ट-श्रम के सम्हाले हुए हूँ
हवा हूँ हवा, मैं बसंती हवा हूँ।

वही हॉ, वही जो धरा का बसंती
सुसंगीत मीठा गुँजाती फिरी हूँ
हवा हूँ हवा, मैं बसंती हवा हूँ।

वही हॉ, वही जो सभी प्राणियों को
पिला प्रेम-आसव जिलाए हुए हूँ
हवा हूँ हवा, मैं बसंती हवा हूँ।

क़सम रूप की है, क़सम प्रेम की है,
क़सम इस हृदय की, सुनो बात मेरी,
अनोखी हवा हूँ बड़ी बावली हूँ!
बड़ी मस्तमौला, नहीं कुछ फ़िकर है,
बड़ी ही निडर हूँ जिधर चाहती हूँ
उधर घूमती हूँ मुसाफ़िर अजब हूँ!
न घर-बार मेरा, न उद्देश्य मेरा,
न इच्छा किसी की, न आशा किसी की,
न प्रेमी, न दुश्मन,
जिधर चाहती हूँ उधर घूमती हूँ!
हवा हूँ हवा, मैं बसंती हवा हूँ।
जहाँ से चली मैं जहाँ को गई मैं,
शहर, गाँव, बस्ती,
नदी, रेत, निर्जन, हरे खेत, पोखर,
झुलाती चली मैं, झुमाती चली मैं,
हवा हूँ हवा, मैं बसंती हवा हूँ।

चढ़ी पेड़ महुआ, थपाथप मचाया,
गिरी धम्म से फिर, चढ़ी आम ऊपर,

उसे भी झकोरा, किया कान में 'कू'
उतर कर भगी मैं हरे खेत पहुँची,
वहाँ गेहूँओं में लहर खूब मारी,
पहर दो पहर क्या, अनेकों पहर तक
इसी में रही मैं।
खड़ी देख अलसी लिए शीश कलसी,
मुझे खूब सूझी!
हिलाया—झुलाया, गिरी पर न कलसी!
इसी हार को पा,
हिलाई न सरसों, झुलाई न सरसों,
मज़ा आ गया तब,
न सुध—बुध रही कुछ,
बसंती नवेली भरे गात में थी!
हवा हूँ, हवा, मैं बसंती हवा हूँ!

मुझे देखते ही अरहरी लजायी,
मनाया—बनाया, न मानी, न मानी,
उसे भी न छोड़ा,
पथिक आ रहा था, उसी पर ढकेला,
लगी जा हृदय से, कमर से चिपक कर,
हँसी ज़ोर से मैं, हँसी सब दिशाएँ,
हँसे लहलहाते हरे खेत सारे,
हँसी चमचमाती भरी धूप प्यारी,
बसंती हवा में हँसी सृष्टि सारी!
हवा हूँ, हवा, मैं बसंती हवा हूँ।

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