



# PEOPLE AND UN

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**EMIR OF KUWAIT SHEIKH MESHAL AL AHMAD AL  
JABER AL SABAH HONOURS INDIAN PRIME MINISTER  
NARENDRA MODI WITH KUWAIT'S HIGHEST AWARD  
'THE ORDER OF MUBARAK AL KABEER'**



## CONDOLENCE

The members of Indian Federation of United Nations Associations (IFUNA) deeply mourn the sad demise of Dr. Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of Republic of India and expresses heartfelt condolences to the members of his families and the people of the nation.

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ART CRITIC

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## Trump- “returns to the global stage”

**F**our years back in January 2021 when Donald Trump left the White House as President of United States the scenario was different. Since then much water has flown round the rivers of the world to change the scenario. More than thousand days ongoing battle between Russia and Ukraine, conflict in Middle East between Israel and Hamas and its associates, uncertainty in Syria after Al-Basara exit and turmoil in Bangladesh are some of the serious questions, the world today is anxiously looking towards him (Trump) for a resolve. U. S. has remained deeply involved in one way or other in these crises during the tenure of Trump's present predecessor.

Not only the western powers but also most of the nation's round the world are anxious and worried to know about Trump's future plans in his second coming. There is a rising rumour that the president-elect will threaten massive tariffs against the European Union as well as some other countries including China and to some extent India also.. There's also concern that Trump may fracture NATO in his second term. His views on his neighbor Mexico and immigrants are well known.

However his trip to Paris where he tried to get a first-hand personal assessment of the situation by a personal talk with France President Macron and president Zelensky of Ukraine he has created a hope of good will of his positive approach of the situation to solve the issues. With his personal relations with Russian President Putin and other leaders of the countries round the globe, people are expecting peace in the regions very soon. There is also a positive response from Putin to meet Trump. Let us hope for the best.

As far as India is concerned, Prime Minister Modi's personal rapport and friendship with President elect Trump is well known. It is believed, with their mutual understandings and positive approach India's relations with United States will further strengthen to new height.

– Pran Mohan Parvatiyar  
[pmparvatiyar@gmail.com](mailto:pmparvatiyar@gmail.com)



Elon Musk joins former President Donald Trump during a campaign rally at site of his first assassination attempt in Butler, Pa. on Oct. 5. Jim Watson





## WHAT'S UP

2024 THE TELEGRAPH THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2024

### GLIMPSES OF THE WEBFUNA GALA AWARDS CHARITY BALL AT THE LALIT GREAT EASTERN

**T**he West Bengal United Nations Association (WBUNA) was established over 45 years ago and is a distinguished organisation committed to upholding the values of the United Nations. As a member of the United Nations Association (UNA) and a member of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), WBUNA works to promote multilateralism and the principles of the UN Charter. Over the decades, it has actively conducted programmes supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Recently, WBUNA celebrated United Nations Day with a Gala Awards Charity Ball at the Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata. The event aimed to honour individuals and organisations contributing to social causes while underscoring the United Nations' critical role in fostering global peace and development. By bringing together diplomats, policymakers and leaders, WBUNA continues to champion the UN's mission to create a better world.



Dr. Karan Singh, regional director (Asia) and country director for India of EARTH Day Network, received the award for his irreplaceable services in protecting against climate change.



Dr. Suman Singh (left), CEO of Hope Foundation, was awarded for the development of street children through protection, education and healthcare.



Dr. Gaurav Dasgupta, CEO of Mission Saanika, was awarded the WEBFUNA award 2024 for irreplaceable services in the area of health, by professor and MIT, Saugata Roy.



Dr. Anand Kumar, CEO of Mission Saanika, was awarded the WEBFUNA award 2024 for irreplaceable services in the area of health, by professor and MIT, Saugata Roy.



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke at the event.



A woman in a yellow sari presented an award to a man in a suit.



A woman in a yellow sari presented an award to a man in a suit.



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## Human Rights Day

# IFUNA Celebrated

## With UTKAL Federation of UN Association

### *“DIGNITY And Justice For All” Is The Call*



**U**N Human Rights Day was observed at Dhenkanal in Odisha by UFUNA and IFUNA collaboration this day the 10th December 2024. Hotel Devkanya serving the venue, this celebration-cum-Seminar was joined by former finance minister of Odisha Sj. Shashi Bhusan Behera, former Union Minister Sj. Bhajaman Behera, former Mass Education Minister Sj. Nabin Narayan Das and retired judge Sj. Bhikari Charan Rout as guests.

The program was inaugurated by WFUNA's Vice President Mr. Suresh Srivastav through video conferencing mode. The key speakers at the seminar were Mr. Santosh Mohapatra, policy analyst & columnist, Ms. Meera Beura, writer and others. While the welcome address was delivered by UFUNA Secretary General Dr. Dipayan Pattanaik, the guests and speakers were introduced by poet Bahadur Patasahani.

The Seminar started with the Day's theme and key messages with Sj. Manoranjan Pattanaik on chair. Opening his words on world peace with reference to the Buddha, Shri Bhajaman ji mentioned of Ahimsa as the super most value of human race. Ours being Buddha's land of initiation to Ahimas, we should have become the front runner in restoring and leading world peace; and it's high time for self evaluation. The right remedy could start with the reviewing of the caste-system that has been harming our human rights since ages.

Shri Shashibhusan ji made a mention of the Russia-Ukrain war that has already played havoc to human life, living and peace, Polarized war fronts and forums are devastating human rights;

and the call or command of the world bodies, be it United Nations or other peace-lobbies are falling to deaf years. Now, the small forums, collectives at grass root level the world over have to put forward their appeals. We need to defy the war-mangers. The call, in the world of UN, should be 'OUR RIGHTS, OUR FUTURE, RIGHT NOW'.

Shri Navin ji recalling the basics of human rights dealt with right to life and that too with dignity. Causing harm to livelihood be it war, unplanned development etc. is clear violation of human rights. The governments as guardians of people's interest need to guard against such acts.

Shri Bhikari Charan ji mentioned of violation of right to life with an example, that in case a medical person with professional skills and practice refuses or delays treatment or needful medical care just on the plea of non-payment of fees, it's a cognizable case of human rights violation. Each human life is precious and be treated as such. Any negligence, any deprivation causing harm to life, livelihood, social dignity have causing harm to life, livelihood, social dignity have to be done away with to sustain the civilization and human race.

Mr. Santosh Mahapatra dwelt on the basic theme of human rights that starts right from birth; and even when it is in mother's womb, Every human body has the right of survival, growth & right grooming and social-cultural participation. This is to ensure for every human child full or optimal growth, and thereby contributing to human civilization. The state and all over the globe have to take responsibility towards its compliance.

The other dignitaries such as Mr. Upendra Rout, Smt. Smitarani Samal, Er. Abinash Das placed their valuable observations that dignity, freedom and justice for all should remain as best indicators of any civilization and for that matter, our civilization.

In the concluding session Shri Shesadev Rout, a leading social worker was felicitated for his devotion to people's welfare. This was followed by a recital of poems by eminent poets hailing human dignity, liberty and world peace.

In his thanks- giving address social activist Shri Saroj Satpathy recalled this year's UNHR theme- "Our Rights, Our Future". "And this call reminds us of our fundamental role in ensuring human rights irrespective of territorial boundary, religious leaning or race. And the universal Declaration of Human Rights just not remain as an academic feature; it needs to be realized".





# IFUNA and UFUNA observed 79th United Nations Day



**INAUGURATED BY SHRI SRIKANT JENA, FORMER UNION MINISTER, GOVT. OF INDIA, THE EVENT WAS FOLLOWED BY A SEMINAR ON THE THEME OF 'STATE & ROLE OF UNITED NATIONS TODAY WITH SRI MANORANJAN PATTANAİK, NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT OF IFUNA ON CHAIR.**

**O**N 30th October 2024 at: Hotel Deb Kanya, Dhenkanal ( Odisha ) eminent personalities from judiciary, social work, political practices, civil society and media joined to observe the 79th United Nations Day, organized jointly by the Utkal Federation of UN Association (UFUNA) and Indian Federation of United Nations Associations (IFUNA). The key concern and message that surfaced was - Time is running out and the united Nations have to gear up to effectively match the present demands of the geo-climatic and other social-diplomatic changes the world over;

Inaugurated by Shri Srikant Jena, former Union Minister, Govt. of India, the event was followed by a Seminar on the theme of 'State & Role of United Nations Today with Sri Manoranjan Pattanaik, National Vice President of IFUNA on chair. At the outset the message for the Day from Shri Suresh Srivastav, Secretary General of IFUNA was read out by Dr. Dipayan Pattanaik that contained general concerns that, for the UN functions now, many issues remain

unattended especially in the fronts of world peace and reforming of UN Security Council.

Speaking on the issue of our rights and life with dignity Hon'ble justice D.P. Choudhury, former judge of Odisha High Court proclaimed of the Inherent Rights of Every Human being. He emphasized on the rights to seek & get justice; and at the same time living a life of dignity in an unharmed nature and environment. The UN Declaration of Human Rights that is now warranted to become even wider has to address the aspect of 'Conflict of Interest' between many nations, heavy weights or defined otherwise.

Expressing his views Shri Jena mentioned of India's participation in the UN processes at very early stage of its inception. His concern was focused on the present day's was crisis in the two major fronts involving Russia & Ukraine and between Palestine & Israel with overt or covert support from key allies of politico-commercial interest of varied nature. In all, there is mistrust and threat to global life. And it has to be mitigated since it cannot be



**The Audience**

**JOINING THE DISCUSSION SOCIAL ACTIVIST SHRI SAROJ SATAPATHY BROUGHT IN THE NON-DEMOCRATIC OR NOT-SO-DEMOCRATIC APPROACH OF THE PRESENT DAY'S UN BODY. AND GIVEN THE ORIGINAL CHARTERS OF THIS GLOBAL BODY OF 193 NATIONS, THERE WAS AN URGENT NEED TO REVAMP ITS ORGANS.**

eliminated given the partisan approach of certain nations belonging to confronting camps. However, he focused on "acting locally" with immediate issues of mass interest and livelihood.

Joining the discussion social activist Shri Saroj Satapathy brought in the non-democratic or not-so-democratic approach of the present day's UN body. And given the original charters of this global body of 193 nations, there was an urgent need to revamp its organs.

Former judge and UFUNA Vice-Chairperson Shri Bhikari Charan Rout hinted at the core values of civilization that unity, friendship and love are divinely bestowed upon man; and on this very context the key charters of United Nations were shaped up. Now we have to follow and act upon these towards universal good.

Shri Shashibhusan Behera, former

Minister and Parliamentarian, in his words, defended the UN's status as a world-body with mandates of global welfare and all-round growth irrespective of its non-compliance in certain fronts. He stressed on our part, our active, better say proactive roles in making the civil society forums more active & empowered and to see things happen in favour of mass interest. A majority of our not-so-poor people have now become pleasure-seeking and dumb to a good extent; and this needs to be dropped down;

Dr. Tusharkanti Nayak a leading social activist suggested to try hard to involve the upcoming youth as a priority agenda of UFUNA. Economic analyst Dr. Santosh Mohapatra explained on the dominance of USA over most of the activities of the United Nations like a "monkey-dance-master". Countering the opinion that by now the UN has become 'redundant', he said that this





observation schedule, there was the "Kavita Pathotsav" (recitation of poems) by a dozen of poets, mostly on the themes of social justice, women's empowerment and citizenry duties. And it added a boost to the theme.

Rejoin theme session Shri Bhajaman Behera, former Union Minister and octogenarian politician spoke on the "UN" s role towards restoring peace with application of suitable strategies. Violence and war very much ills the spirit of the UN formation. We need to turn back to the Buddhist thoughts and practices that promotes Ahimsa that is non-violence; and the fresh pledge of no-war be given utmost priority. And for this, the social workers, the alert citizens and professionals have to replicate the task of the Buddhist monks as touring-teachers of the communities across the nation.

Sharing his thoughts on the theme and slap resonating his response to the points raised in the course of discussion Shri Brajakishore Tripathy, former Union Minister & Parliamentarian placed his hopes on the good functioning of some of the UN-Organs like UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, UNEP etc. Hence, this global platform-cum-organization is very much required. As such, basing on the golden principle " To think globally & Act locally", we need to localize the UN charters to whatever extent possible and to put our best efforts at this.

The other contributors at the Seminar were educationist, Mr. Bimbadhar Behera, Ms. Meera, Mr. Saroj Satapathy and Dr. Lalit Narayan Rath and Mr. Bahadur Patasahani, poet & General Secretary, UFUNA and Mr. Rudra Prakash Sharan,

#### **The concluding phase: -**

(i) There was a resolve to put in a memorandum to the nation authorities related to UN affairs towards waging influence to stop the ongoing wars between Russia & Ukraine and Israel & Palestine and to restore world-peace.

(ii) There took place a Awarding ceremony where eminent contributors in various people's-welfare field were honored with citations in the hands of the Chief Guest and other honored guests; and the recipients were :

*Prof. Dr. Atanu Mohanty for Orthopedic & Plastic Surgery, Shri Upendra Rout for Environment Promotion action, Smt. Smitarani Samal for Womens' Empowerment & Social work. neer Abinash Das for Youth Motivation & Social work, Adhyapak, Bijoy Kumar Sahoo for Youth Education & Social work.*

global body has been made weaker, - and by now the most vital organ the Security Council of the UN has almosme a podium of shadow-boring; and such state of this august institution need to be corrected. He also made a mention of the global corporates who view India only as a huge market and venue of investment who again promote dollar hegemony at all costs exerting influence on the grout-aspiring nations mostly in Asia, Latin America and Africa. And the DGP growth concept of development should not be preached, as it is being done by our governments; rather the focus should be on eliminating the inequality among our people in availing their share of life with dignity & justice. For this, we need to strengthen our democratic norms and institutions with primary focus on poverty alleviation; and for this poverty shall not be equated with starvation-line.

During the break, as planned in the

**THE INHERENT DIVERSITY OF INDIA'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE, CHARACTERIZED BY A MULTITUDE OF REGIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL INTERESTS, HAS MADE COALITION-BUILDING A NECESSITY FOR GOVERNANCE. HOWEVER, THE CHRONIC INSTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH COALITION GOVERNMENTS UNDERSCORE THE NEED FOR A ROBUST AND SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK.**



## IFUNA observed UN Day with Assam UNA at Girijananda Choudhury University, Guwahati



**T**HE INDIAN Federation of United Nations Associations (IFUNA), New Delhi observed the UN Day in collaboration with the Girijananda Choudhury University, Guwahati on 24th October, 2024 at the premises of esteemed University.

Dr. Aswini Kumar Sarma, Secretary General of UNA - Assam presided over the meeting.

Dr. Jayanta Deka, Hon'ble Chancellor of the esteemed University stated that the UN was formed with the objective of promoting peace and security in the world and to prevent the future World war.

Dr. Nitul Gogoi, IPS, Former IGP (Assam Police) in his speech said that the UN was formed on 24th October, 1945 at San Francisco with 51 countries as original members including India.

Earlier, Dr. Aswini Sarma - Secretary General of UNA - Assam read out the message of UN Secretary General Mr. Antonio Guterres on the occasion.

Mrs. Marami Goswami - Academic officer of UNA, Assam, Mrs. Purabi Devi - official of UNA - Assam, faculties, staffs & Students of the esteemed University were present on the occasion.





## ATTACKS ON MINORITIES BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES -AN UNITED NATIONS PERSPECTIVE



HUNDREDS GATHER IN US TO PROTEST VIOLENCE AGAINST HINDUS IN BANGLADESH



—by **VINAYAK SRIVASTAVA**  
Advocate, Delhi High Court  
Additional Secretary  
General, IFUNA

The protection of minorities is the basic Human Right and which forms the very essence of United Nations Charter. Recent attacks on minority community of Bangladesh comprising of Hindus, Christians and Buddhist have raised serious concerns on the human right record of Bangladesh Government most particularly Md. Yunus Interim Government. Since the fall of PM Hasina Government, there has been a targeted attack on Hindus & their places of worship by Muslim Fundamentalist. This has raised serious questions on the ability of the present interim Government of Bangladesh to control extremist elements in Bangladesh society. Bangladesh being the member of United

Nations is obliged to defend and protect rights of the minority community in Bangladesh. The UN Charter, particularly through its preamble and Article 1, emphasizes the promotion of human rights and the dignity of individuals. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), recognizes the rights of all individuals, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Article 18) and the right to participate in cultural life (Article 27). Further Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which was ratified by Bangladesh in the year 2000, explicitly safeguards the rights of minorities, stating that in countries with ethnic, religious, or linguistic minori-





Hindu minority in Bangladesh have been protesting incidents of violence and rhetoric against them

**IN ADDITION TO ITS INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS, THE BANGLADESH CONSTITUTION PROVIDES SAFEGUARDS FOR MINORITY RIGHTS. ARTICLE 28 OF THE CONSTITUTION PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION, RACE, CASTE, SEX, AND PLACE OF BIRTH, WHILE ARTICLE 41 GUARANTEES FREEDOM OF RELIGION.**

ties, individuals belonging to such groups should not be denied the right to enjoy their own culture, practice their religion, or use their language.

In addition to its international obligations, the Constitution of Bangladesh also prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth (i.e. Article 28), while Article 41 guarantees freedom of religion. However, the effectiveness of these constitutional provisions has often been undermined by in elective government and judicial mechanisms. If any member

state of United Nations fails to uphold principles enshrined in UN Charter, the United Nations has several mechanism through which UN could force such Member state to take action in this regard. The Human Right Council (HRC) can call upon Member states to conduct sessions to discuss and deliberate upon any human rights violations in any Member States. In case of abuse of minority rights, they can call upon Member State to take action to safeguard their rights. They may also appoint independent human rights experts, known as Special Rappor-



teurs, to advise and report on human rights issues. In case of crimes against humanity by any Member State, International Criminal Court can take cognizance and pass judgment against the Member State for any abuse of Human Right.

India being a neighbor and an active stakeholder in Bangladesh situation particularly concerning plight of Hindus, can also take necessary action against Bangladesh. Instability in Bangladesh directly affects India's own security and geo political interest. To address the issue, India can directly engage with

Bangladesh Interim Government and ask them to protect minorities and their places of worship. India can also engage United States to pressure the Bangladeshi Government to address the issue of minority protection in Bangladesh. It's worth noting that President Trump himself has condemned the persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh. India can bring the issue to the international platforms such as United Nations, QUAD, BRICS and SCO of which it is member to exert more pressure upon Bangladesh to comply with its Human Rights obligations. This

**THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL APPOINTS INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS, KNOWN AS SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS, TO ADVISE AND REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS ON MINORITY ISSUES OR FREEDOM OF RELIGION CAN INVESTIGATE AND REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN BANGLADESH, PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY.**





## One move by India can damage Bangladesh severely as Dhaka is 94% dependent on India.

*India-Bangladesh relations have slumped after the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and an interim government led by Muhammad Yunus, coming to the helm in Dhaka.*



**B**angladesh, which shares 94 percent of its border with India, is highly dependent on its larger neighbour, especially from an economic and security point of view. Bangladesh's 4,367 km long border makes it dependent on India for security and trade, with New Delhi being Dhaka's biggest trading partner.

In 2022-23, the total trade between India and Bangladesh was \$16 billion, in which the latter's exports to the former only accounted for around \$2 billion, meaning Dhaka has massive trade deficit with New Delhi. Bangladesh imports key products and essentials such as cotton, food grains, sugar, electronics, and steel, among others from India, and halting of trade would undoubtedly cripple Dhaka's economy.

Bangladesh's textile industry, which is the backbone of the country's economy, contributing 11 per-

cent to its GDP, is also dependent on India. According to reports, India exports 35 percent of its total cotton produce to Bangladesh, and the country's textile industry will be badly hit if these imports are stopped.

As per reports, Bangladesh has suffered a loss of Rs 2 lakh crore since the fall of Sheikh Hasina in August, due to which the country's which the GDP growth rate has dropped to under 5 percent, from the earlier 6.3 percent. Additionally, a rapid decline has been witnessed in per capita income and soaring

inflation has worsened the situation.

Bangladesh's textile industry is also facing heavy losses and many companies are on the brink shutting their operations due to the deteriorating law and order situation, and the increasing violence against minorities, especially the Hindus, in the country. Bangladesh's textile industry is the second largest in the world after China, with many top global brands manufacturing their apparel in the country.

--- india.com

**THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO SAFEGUARD THE RIGHTS OF MINORITY COMMUNITIES, ESPECIALLY HINDUS, CHRISTIANS & BUDDHIST IS BOLSTERED BY BOTH INTERNATIONAL LAW AND DOMESTIC LEGAL FRAMEWORKS.**

includes supporting/introducing resolutions that condemn violence against minorities and calling for accountability. If the Indian government deems it necessary, it can impose economic sanctions on the Bangladesh government if it fails to protect the rights of its citizens.

The Bangladesh government's responsibility to safeguard the rights of minority communities,

especially Hindus, Christians & Buddhist is obligated by both international law and domestic legal frameworks. Rise of attacks upon minorities, may tarnish the image of Bangladesh as responsible nation. It is in their own interest to take action in this regard otherwise the Nation risk facing similar fate like what their foe Pakistan has become





# PM Modi's historic visit to Kuwait strengthens strategic ties, champions India-GCC partnership

*Both countries acknowledged the significant contributions of the Indian community in Kuwait's economic development*

## INDIA, KUWAIT BOLSTER DEFENCE TIES



**T**he historic visit of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kuwait on Dec 21-22, has culminated in the signing of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kuwait resulted in significant achievements, with multiple memorandums of understanding (MoUs) signed between the two nations.

India, which reported trade worth \$184.46 billion with Kuwait and other GCC countries, including the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Qatar-in 2022-23, further cemented its ties

with Kuwait during the PM's visit.

Four major bilateral documents between both friendly nations, Kuwait and India have agreed on raising their bilateral ties to a 'strategic partnership', based on the deep-rooted and cordial relations between the two countries. . "This MoU will institutionalize bilateral cooperation in the area of defence, and key areas of cooperation include training, exchange of personnel and experts, joint exercises, cooperation in the defence industry, supply of defence equipment,

**KUWAIT'S CROWN PRINCE SHEIKH SABAH KHALED AL-HAMAD AL-SABAH (R) RECEIVING INDIA'S PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI (L) AT BAYAN PALACE IN KUWAIT CITY ON DECEMBER 22, 2024**



**INDIA'S PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI MEETS 101-YEAR-OLD EX-IFS OFFICER MANGAL SAIN HANDA DURING A WELCOME BY THE INDIAN DIASPORA ON HIS ARRIVAL, AT A HOTEL IN KUWAIT CITY ON SATURDAY.**

tries to engineering, medical, IT and finance professionals and to further strengthen cooperation, separate working groups in these sectors will meet regularly to explore new avenues for collaboration. The meetings with Kuwait's leadership that focused on the shared historical and cultural ties between India and Kuwait have reaffirmed both nations' commitment to elevate their relationship to a strategic partnership.

Modi's visit marks the deep-rooted ties between the two countries and laid the groundwork for enhanced bilateral cooperation across various sectors. India has been thriving and contributing to the country's development since the 1940s. Considering this, there should have been more high-level engagements between the two countries. With Prime Minister Modi's visit to Kuwait, following his visits to other Gulf nations, it is believed that it will bring about many positive changes and open up new avenues of cooperation,"

### Share

"India and Kuwait," An official of India attending the function, said, "share a deep history, with many commonalities -- whether in our cultures, our functioning democracies, or our longstanding relationship. Modi's visit also offers an opportunity to address some perceptions here in Kuwait. "The Middle East is increasingly looking eastward, and India is well-positioned to play a key role in this shift, as it has done successfully in other Gulf nations, particularly the UAE. He went on to say, the labor force in Kuwait is diverse, and its members have helped shape the economic landscape over the years. While incidents do occur from time to time, including unfortunate losses, it is important to highlight that Kuwait has a robust legal and labor framework to address such issues. "In fact," he added, "Kuwait's labor laws are designed to protect workers, and violations are handled with due process."

He disclosed, in the area of manpower, a dedicated joint working group will address issues related to Indian workers in Kuwait, ensuring their well-being and addressing any challenges they may face. India's growing engagement with Kuwait goes beyond being a source of labor supply and is increasingly being seen as a key partner in Kuwait's broader vision for 2035. This evolving relationship highlights India's expanding role in Kuwait's economic development, especially in light of the country's

and collaboration in research and development, among others," a government statement said.

**Defense Cooperation Agreement --** This includes training exchanges, joint exercises, defense industry collaboration, and supply of defense equipment, along with research and development initiatives.

**Cultural Exchange Program (2025- 2029) --** This agreement will promote cultural exchanges between India and Kuwait, focusing on art, music, literature, theater, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

**Executive Program for Sports Cooperation (2025-2028) --** This program aims to enhance bilateral cooperation in sports, including the exchange of sports leaders, and expertise in sports medicine, management, media, and sports science.

**International Solar Alliance Membership --** Kuwait has joined the International Solar Alliance, which focuses on scaling up the use of solar energy and addressing key challenges in developing low-carbon growth trajectories.

### Contributions

Both countries have acknowledged the significant contributions of the Indian community in Kuwait's economic development, particularly in sectors like health and education, oil indus-

**"INDIA AND KUWAIT," AN OFFICIAL OF INDIA ATTENDING THE FUNCTION, SAID, "SHARE A DEEP HISTORY, WITH MANY COMMONALITIES -- WHETHER IN OUR CULTURES, OUR FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACIES, OR OUR LONGSTANDING RELATIONSHIP. MODI'S VISIT ALSO OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS SOME PERCEPTIONS HERE IN KUWAIT.**





**PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI RECEIVES A WARM WELCOME FROM MEMBERS OF THE INDIAN DIASPORA ON HIS ARRIVAL AT KUWAIT.**



**INDIA'S PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI SIGNS A COPY AS HE MEETS ABDUL LATEEF ALNESEF, THE BOOK PUBLISHER AND ABDULLAH BARON, THE TRANSLATOR OF RAMAYANA AND MAHABHARATA IN THE ARABIC LANGUAGE AT A HOTEL IN KUWAIT CITY.**

massive funds and substantial investment plans, he added. He said, Modi is optimistic about the future of India-Kuwait ties, highlighting the role of the Indian community in shaping the relationship and the promising opportunities for further cooperation in the years ahead

Another key development was the cultural exchange programme (CEP) signed for the years 2025-29. "The CEP will facilitate greater cultural exchanges in art, music, dance, literature, and theatre, cooperation in the preservation of cultural heritage, research and development in the area of culture, and organizing festivals," the statement said.

In the field of sports, an executive programme was introduced to bolster bilateral cooperation. "The executive programme will strengthen bilateral cooperation in the field of sports between India and Kuwait by promoting exchange of visits of sports leaders for experience sharing." Moreover, it will include participation in programmes and projects related to sports, exchange of expertise in sports medicine, sports management, sports media, and sports science, among others.

A notable highlight of the visit was Kuwait's membership in the International

Solar Alliance. "The International Solar Alliance collectively covers the deployment of solar energy and addresses key common challenges to the scaling up of use of solar energy to help member countries develop low-carbon growth trajectories," the government said.

Kuwait remains one of India's top trading partners, with bilateral trade valued at \$10.47 billion in the financial year 2023-24. India is a key partner for Kuwait, and the Indian community forms the largest expatriate group in the Gulf nation. Kuwait is also India's sixth-largest crude oil supplier, meeting 3% of its energy needs. Indian exports to Kuwait reached \$2 billion for the first time, while investments from the Kuwait Investment Authority in India exceeded \$10 billion.

Indians constitute 21 per cent (1 million) of the total population of Kuwait and 30 per cent of its workforce (approximately 9 lakh). Indian workers top the private sector as well as the domestic sector workforce list, according to Indian Embassy in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the Indian Embassy in Kuwait disclosed Prime Minister Modi has extended an invitation to His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait to visit India.

**ANOTHER KEY DEVELOPMENT WAS THE CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME (CEP) SIGNED FOR THE YEARS 2025-29. "THE CEP WILL FACILITATE GREATER CULTURAL EXCHANGES IN ART, MUSIC, DANCE, LITERATURE, AND THEATRE, COOPERATION IN THE PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA OF CULTURE, AND ORGANIZING FESTIVALS," THE STATEMENT SAID.**





## Rajnath Singh in Moscow pushes Russia to speed up defence contracts

# Russian defense chief commends growing defense ties with India



**A SEPARATE MOU WAS SIGNED BY RUSSIAN HELICOPTERS AND INDO-RUSSIAN HELICOPTERS LTD FOR LOCALISATION OF COMPONENTS TO BE USED IN KAMOV KA-226 HELICOPTERS. INDIA HAS PLANS TO BUY 200 KA-226 HELICOPTERS.**

**R**ussian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov met with India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to discuss strengthening bilateral ties and military cooperation. Rajnath Singh highlighted the successful collaboration between the two countries on multilateral platforms, including the G20, BRICS, and SCO. Belousov emphasized the strong, time-honored friendship between Russia and India, built on mutual respect and trust. Both ministers reviewed key areas for enhancing military and military-technical cooperation between

their nations, focusing on mutual goals for regional and global stability. On defence contracts, India and Russia have inked deals worth \$16 billion. Moscow has stated that they are committed to the timely implementation of contracts, including the supply of S-400 air defence systems and production of Kalashnikov rifles and Kamov helicopters. Rajnath Singh has reportedly sought the advanced delivery of the Russian S-400 anti-aircraft missile defence system and the purchase of Russian-made Su-30Mki jet fighters and MiG-29. India and Russia



## Andrey Belousov stressed that the relationship based on trust between the two countries' leaders was crucial for strengthening bilateral ties between Russia and India

**M**oscow and New Delhi are effectively developing defense cooperation, Russian Defense Minister Andrey Belousov said. "We are pleased with the robust level of defense cooperation between Russia and India on multilateral platforms, primarily within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting," he stated during talks with Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh.

The Russian defense chief stressed that the relationship based on trust between the two countries' leaders was crucial for strengthening bilateral ties between Russia and India. Belousov thanked his counterpart for visiting Moscow to hold the 21st meeting of the Russian-Indian Intergovernmental Commission on Defense Cooperation. He noted that Moscow and New Delhi "share a strong friendship based on mutual respect, which has stood the test of time."

According to Belousov, the outcome of this year's meetings between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which took place in Moscow in July and on the sidelines of the BRICS



**Vladimir Putin Received Defence Minister Of india Rajnath Singh, Who Was In russia On a working Visit, In the kremlin. russia's Defence Minister andrei Belousov Is Sitting Next To President Putin.**

group's summit in the Russian city of Kazan in October, "helped strengthen our special and privileged strategic partnership, including in the defense sector." "We are committed to executing all the agreements that were reached at the highest level. I am confident that our meeting will contribute to further boosting Russia-India relations in the field of defense and security," Belousov stressed, adding that the meeting was expected "to

thoroughly discuss critical issues related to bilateral defense cooperation." "Despite geopolitical challenges and great pressure both in public and in private, India has made a conscious decision to not only continue its close engagement with Russia, but also to deepen and expand the cooperation, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said in Moscow (December 10, 2024). India has always stood by its Russian friends and will continue to do so in future, he said later in a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin. We will always be with our Russian colleagues, Mr. Singh said, addressing the 21st India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military & Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC), which he co-chaired with his Russian counterpart Andrey Belousov in Moscow.

During the meeting, Shri Rajnath Singh said "Friendship between our countries is higher than the highest mountain and deeper than the deepest ocean." India has always stood by its Russian friends and will continue to do so in future, he added.

signed the S-400 deal worth more than \$5 billion in 2018 and is currently due in December 2021.

The two countries signed 14 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) during Defexpo 2020 in Lucknow in February this year that covered development and production of land, air and naval systems and hi-tech civilian products.

A separate MoU was signed by Russian Helicopters and Indo-Russian Helicopters Ltd for localisation of components to be used in Kamov Ka-226 helicopters. India has plans to buy 200 Ka-226 helicopters.

Indian Air Force (IAF) signed a Rs 1,500 crore deal with Russia for buying R-27 air-to-air missiles. The missiles will be fitted on the IAF's multi-role Su-30MKI fighter jets. The missiles will further boost the air-to-air combat capability of the Indian Air Force.

Meanwhile, Rajnath Singh, in a tweet, said that

his official visit to Russia amid the pandemic is a sign of special friendship with the country. Despite all the difficulties of the pandemic, our bilateral relations are keeping good contacts at the various levels," the Minister said.

Terming his meeting with Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Yury Borisov as "very positive and productive", Singh on Tuesday said he was assured by the Russian leadership that all ongoing contracts for military supplies will proceed as scheduled and be completed speedily despite the impact of the Covid-19 crisis.

"I have been assured that ongoing contracts will be maintained and not just maintained, in a number of cases will be taken forward in a shorter time," he said.

He added that all proposals have received positive response from the Russian side and he is fully satisfied with the discussions.

**TERMING HIS MEETING WITH RUSSIA'S DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER YURY BORISOV AS "VERY POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE", SINGH ON TUESDAY SAID HE WAS ASSURED BY THE RUSSIAN LEADERSHIP THAT ALL ONGOING CONTRACTS FOR MILITARY SUPPLIES WILL PROCEED AS SCHEDULED AND BE COMPLETED SPEEDILY DESPITE THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS.**





## Sri Lanka's President Visits India

# In India, Sri Lanka's Dissanayake Reasserts Partnership

*Colombo's new leader for better ties with New Delhi*



President Anura Kumara Disanayaka concluded the State Visit to India, at the invitation of Indian President Droupadi Murmu, from 15-17 December 2024. This was his first State Visit since being elected President in September, symbolizing the deep rooted cultural and civilizational ties and the vibrant contemporary relationship nurtured by the two countries.

**DISSANAYAKE'S PREDECESSOR INSTITUTED A ONE-YEAR MORATORIUM ON SUCH VESSELS FROM ANY COUNTRIES IN JANUARY, BUT THAT IS GOING TO END SOON.**

In his first overseas trip since taking office, the newly elected Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayake visited India in mid-December to meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In a far-ranging joint statement, the two leaders agreed to step up economic, energy, and defense cooperation.

Most importantly, Disanayake assured Modi that Sri Lankan territory won't be used "in any way that is detrimental" to India's interests, a possible reference to Indian concerns about Chinese research vessels docking in Sri Lanka and conducting surveillance. Disanayake's predecessor instituted a one-year moratorium on such vessels from

any countries in January, but that is going to end soon.

India faces a challenge with the arrival of a few new leaders in its neighborhood who it sees as pro-Beijing, including Disanayake. But his visit reasserted a long-standing partnership with India, and it offers a reminder that China-friendly leaders are not necessarily China-leaning leaders—they just want to balance ties between the two Asian powers better.

For all the talk of Disanayake's leftist politics and his party's Marxist past, which suggest that he might align with China ideologically, he has consistently signaled his commitment to partnership



**President Disanayaka also travelled to Bodh Gaya, where he paid homage to the sacred relics of the Buddha, Vajrasana which marks the location of the Buddha's enlightenment and the sacred Bodhi Tree. He offered Buddha pooja and alms to the resident venerable monk.**

with India. In February, Disanayake traveled to India while still a presidential candidate and met Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar; they met again in Colombo in October.

I am thankful to Her Excellency President Shrimati Droupadi Murmu and His Excellency Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for the invitation extended to me and the warm welcome and hospitality. The deep-rooted civilizational ties and the strong bilateral cooperation between our two countries have been elevated during this visit. My visit occurs at an important juncture in the political scenario of both our nations where our peoples have explicitly spoken through the democratically established electoral systems and given us the mandate to steer our countries along the path of sustainable development, social empowerment and prosperity.

I clearly understand that the essence of democracy lies in the coexistence of diverse political views and groups," said President Anura Kumara Disanayake in his address at New Delhi.

India has always been an integral part of the growth and development of Sri Lanka throughout history, from sharing the precepts of the Dhamma to being a partner in our developmental progress.

My visit to India today demonstrates these close and friendly ties that we have been enjoying since time immemorial.

Just a while ago, Prime Minister Modi and I

along with our respective delegations concluded our bilateral deliberations. We carried out a comprehensive review of the present status of our relations and exchanged views on the ways and means to further strengthen our cooperation in areas of mutual interest in the future.

I thanked Prime Minister Modi and the Government of India for the unwavering support extended to Sri Lanka, especially during the unprecedented economic crisis the country underwent in 2022 and for strongly supporting Sri Lanka's debt restructuring process. Prime Minister Modi assured India's full commitment for the sustained economic growth of Sri Lanka in keeping with the special place Sri Lanka occupies in India's foreign policy framework.

Prime Minister Modi and I acknowledged the importance of intensifying political engagements at various levels, including through cooperation between the parliamentary institutions of the two countries.

We also discussed trade and investment cooperation between the two countries and investments in key sectors.

I wish to conclude by reiterating that Sri Lanka attaches great importance to the continuous development and deepening of cooperation with India, which I have no doubt would be further consolidated in the years to come, Sri Lanka President said.

**I THANKED PRIME MINISTER MODI AND THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA FOR THE UNWAVERING SUPPORT EXTENDED TO SRI LANKA, ESPECIALLY DURING THE UNPRECEDENTED ECONOMIC CRISIS THE COUNTRY UNDERWENT IN 2022 AND FOR STRONGLY SUPPORTING SRI LANKA'S DEBT RESTRUCTURING PROCESS. PRIME MINISTER MODI ASSURED INDIA'S FULL COMMITMENT FOR THE SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH OF SRI LANKA IN KEEPING WITH THE SPECIAL PLACE SRI LANKA OCCUPIES IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY FRAMEWORK.**



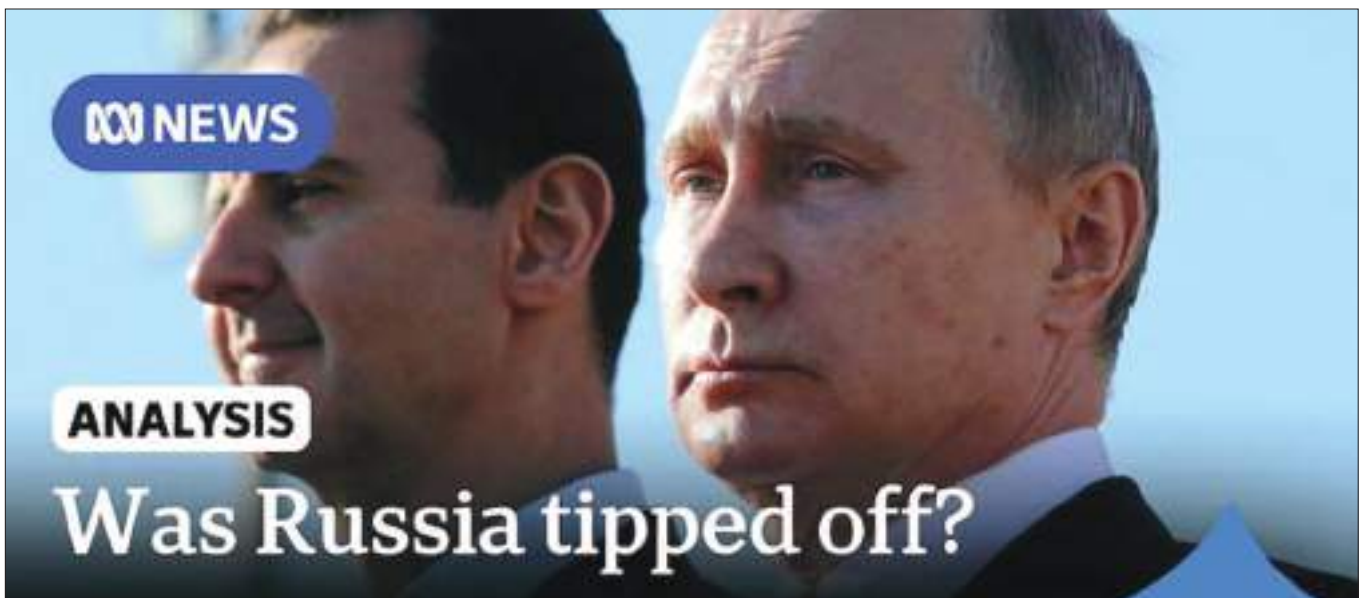


# Did Vladimir Putin let Bashar al-Assad's regime fall in Syria?

*Was he already cultivating new relationships in the region?*

*Did Russia know the Assad regime was doomed to collapse?*

*The fall of President Bashar al-Assad raises critical questions about the future of Syria and who speaks for its people*



Bashar al-Assad with Vladimir Putin

■ by P.M. Parvatiyar

Just 12 hours before the fall of Damascus, Russia, Iran and Türkiye met on the sidelines of the Doha Forum.

**Top of the agenda:** the impending collapse of the Syrian regime. The trio were trying to determine if Bashar al-Assad's government was salvageable. The three countries issued a strong statement calling for the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity, and for negotiations between rebel group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Bashar al-Assad.

But by this point, the diplomats most likely knew it was all over. In an interview with Al Jazeera, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov became increasingly frustrated as the interviewer pressed him on the unfolding situation.

"If you want me to say we lost in Syria, we are so desperate ... if this is what you need, let's continue," Mr Lavrov said.

*"But my point is I am not in the business of guessing what is going to happen. We are trying to not allow terrorists to prevail, even if they say they are no longer terrorists."*

*Putin could have sent more firepower - but he didn't*

There's no doubt the toppling of the Assad regime significantly weakens Vladimir Putin's Middle East power. But it's also clear that Russia was wary of getting caught up in another decades-long conflict. It also has other strategic relationships with Türkiye and the Arab Gulf states that it perhaps didn't want to sacrifice for a dying regime.

In the lead-up to the collapse, Russia did launch air strikes on Syrian rebels in support of the Syrian Arab Armed Forces, but not enough to counter the rebel advances on the capital, Damascus. Assad's own men put up no fight and abandoned their posts.

If Putin had really wanted to, he could have sent in more military firepower - but he didn't.

**"BUT MY POINT IS I AM NOT IN THE BUSINESS OF GUESSING WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN. WE ARE TRYING TO NOT ALLOW TERRORISTS TO PREVAIL, EVEN IF THEY SAY THEY ARE NO LONGER TERRORISTS."**



So, why did the Kremlin effectively sit back as Syria fell to rebel forces?

Firstly, at least for Putin, his hands were full with the war in Ukraine and he didn't really want to divert resources elsewhere. Iran and Lebanon, both backers of Assad, were also fighting battles of their own, with Israel relentlessly targeting what was the region's strongest rebel force, Hezbollah, in recent months.

The writing was on the wall for Russia. Throwing more resources at Syria wasn't going to turn things around for Bashar al-Assad.

"I think the Russians, much like the Iranians, knew that Assad was done for," says **Julien Barnes-Dacy**, the director of the Middle East and North Africa program at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

"He was completely hollowed out and they didn't have the resources or the willingness to go back in with a military force.

"I think this was also a question of them cutting their losses [and] realising that they couldn't bear the pain of backing Assad."

**So, Vladimir Putin appears to have done the unthinkable:** striking a deal with his friend's enemy.

The speculated deal? Agreeing with the rebel HTS forces to let the Assad regime fall quickly, as long as Russia could maintain its strategically important military bases in Syria.

"I think they did strike a deal," **Mr. Barnes-Dacy** says.

"They helped tell Assad that he had to leave, and I think that obviously smoothed the way for a cleaner transition than many people were anticipating. And I think the likes of Türkiye and Arab states clearly welcome that," he said.

The Kremlin has since said it would enter into talks with incoming authorities in Syria about Russia's future military presence.

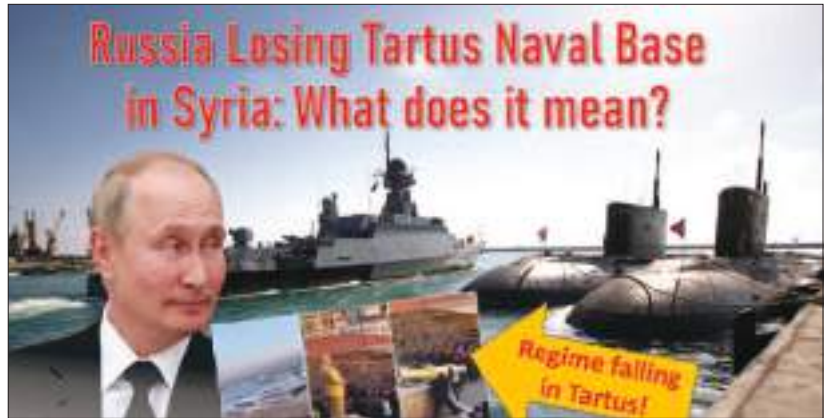
"Even if there is an agreement, will it hold? Because, of course, when the rebels and others are coming through to try and take Damascus, they'll sign whatever is put in front of them if it means that Assad can be swiftly deposed," **Mr Barnes-Dacy** says.

"But who knows where we'll stand in six months, in a year, in two years? And obviously there's a lot of frustration and bitterness towards the Russians and the Iranians and Syria.

"I don't necessarily think that the new Syrian government and those that have come out of Idlib are going to be looking to facilitate an ongoing military presence by the country that was bombing them."

But for Russia, it's better than nothing. To lose all presence after decades of investment would have been an even harder blow.

**Russia's military bases in Syria:** Moscow has two military bases in Syria, which are considered among the Kremlin's most strategically important military outposts:



the Khmeimim Air Base near the port city of Latakia and the Tartus naval base on the Mediterranean coast.

The Tartus naval base is particularly critical, providing Russia with its only direct access to the Mediterranean Sea to conduct naval exercises, dock warships and even host nuclear submarines. Established by the Soviet Union in the 1970s, it was expanded and modernised by Russia in 2012 as the Kremlin began to increase its support for President Assad's regime. Maintaining the base is critical for Moscow, given it has now lost its title as regional powerbroker for conflicts between Israel, Iran and Syria.

Russia and its mercenary groups, such as the Wagner Group, already have footholds across Africa's Sahel region, which includes countries such as Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. "It's served as a transit point for their operations. Clearly, it's played a very helpful instrumental role in Russia projecting its power into the Mediterranean and Africa," Mr. Barnes-Dacy says. "So if that base [in Syria] is lost, if that naval capability is cut off, that will hurt Moscow's ability to project power in that way."

With Hezbollah, Hamas and Syria on the back foot and all but destroyed, the theory now is that Putin will lean into other non-state actors within Iran's so-called Axis of Resistance.

Russia looks to Yemen's Houthis: Moscow has in recent years established and been building its presence in North Africa and Yemen, in particular its relationship with the Houthi rebels. "The indicators are there ... that this relationship is already underway and has been increasing," University of Sydney Professor Sarah Phillips told the ABC news. "There have been some weapons transfers - not huge, from what we can tell, but there have been weapons transfers from Russia going to the Houthis.

"There's been exchange in intelligence, there have been military advisers from Russia in Sana'a, and there's been some fighters from the Houthis reportedly going to fight in Ukraine as well."

The actions of Yemen's Houthis in the Red Sea have

**RUSSIA AND ITS MERCENARY GROUPS, SUCH AS THE WAGNER GROUP, ALREADY HAVE FOOHOLDS ACROSS AFRICA'S SAHEL REGION, WHICH INCLUDES COUNTRIES SUCH AS NIGER, MALI AND BURKINA FASO. IT'S SERVED AS A TRANSIT POINT FOR THEIR OPERATIONS. CLEARLY, IT'S PLAYED A VERY HELPFUL INSTRUMENTAL ROLE IN RUSSIA PROJECTING ITS POWER INTO THE MEDITERRANEAN AND AFRICA," MR. BARNES-DACY SAYS. "SO IF THAT BASE [IN SYRIA] IS LOST, IF THAT NAVAL CAPABILITY IS CUT OFF, THAT WILL HURT MOSCOW'S ABILITY TO PROJECT POWER IN THAT WAY."**





## LATEST

**A**ssad told Iran about Turkey's efforts to topple regime before ouster: - Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei accused the US, Israel, and an unnamed neighboring country, likely Turkey, of orchestrating the toppling of Assad in Syria.

### In Short

- Assad accused Turkey of backing rebels to overthrow him, Iranian officials say
- Iran expressed Assad's concerns to Turkey over rebel support, say Iranian officials
- Assad's ouster seen as blow to Iran-led power axis

In the final days leading to his ouster, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad complained to Iran's foreign minister that Turkey was actively supporting Sunni rebels in their offensive to topple him, two Iranian officials told Reuters this week.

Five decades of rule by Assad's family ended on Sunday when he fled to Moscow, where the government granted him asylum. Iran had backed Assad in Syria's long civil war and his overthrow was widely seen as a major blow to the Iran-led "Axis of Resistance", a political and military alliance that opposes Israeli and US influence in the Middle East

HTS risks: 'spreading themselves too thin'-Rob Geist Pinfold, a professor of peace and security at Durham University, says HTS is facing an "extremely complicated balancing act" as Syria attempts to form a government.

"HTS does not have the people to run the Syrian government. It cannot get rid of everyone and then basically create a source of resentment - a bunch of armed or experienced men who want to start an insurgency like we saw with de-Baathification in Iraq," he told Al Jazeera. "But at the same time, they will face calls for justice." Pinfold said the real risk for HTS is "spreading themselves too thin" as Syria faces financial struggles during its rebuilding. "This is not, at the moment, a wealthy country," he said. "This is a broken and war-torn country that's going to need rebuilding." "So I think we shouldn't set too high aspirations for HTS and its new government."



**SYRIA'S PRESIDENT BASHAR AL-ASSAD WITH IRANIAN SUPREME LEADER AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI IN TEHRAN. (FILE PHOTO: REUTERS)**

Syria's opposition is a 'delicate coalition': The Syrian National Council was recognised internationally after the beginning of the civil war in Syria in 2011 as the representative of Syrians on the international scene, where it has engaged in several rounds of negotiations. But the council has lost its influence at home over the years, said Al Jazeera's Resul Serdar. "The opposition is a fragmented, delicate coalition," he said. "And while they were losing their force in Syria, the armed groups were gaining more and more power," said Serdar, noting that the council was eventually reduced to a "symbolic government that is living abroad but with no power in Syria". Council leaders have said they are recognising the transitional government in Syria but that they expect them to share power with other groups. Syria's de facto leader, al-Sharaa, for his part, has made clear that while all Syrians are welcome to participate in the new political process, they can do so as individuals and not as part of a power-sharing agreement between factions.

"He said that the new Syria is not going to be based on power sharing," said Serdar. "There will be one government and one Syria. Every opposition figure is welcome to come and contribute individually to rebuild Syria, but not as entities."

trade. From an ideological standpoint, they also show the United States and its allies that Israel's dominance in the region won't go unchallenged.

The Houthi rebels have claimed responsibility for attacks on international ships in the Red Sea since the beginning of Israel's war in Gaza. (Houthi Military Media/Handout via Reuters)

"But the thing to remember here is that the Houthis are not Hamas. The Houthis are not Hezbollah. The Houthis are, first and foremost, a domestic group, and they've got domestic aims, and they see their international actions through that prism," **Professor Phillips** says. "They want to govern all of Yemen, and particularly they want to gain access to and control over its most resource-rich areas. That's [their]

primary goal. "They aren't going to be - or they'll be very wary of being seen as - 'guns for hire' for Vladimir Putin and Russia. The Houthis have always done what the Houthis want to do. "There is a strong convergence of interests between Russia and the Houthi rebels, but their relationship is unlikely to replace what Moscow has lost in Syria. One meeting on the sidelines of the Doha Forum heralded the beginning of the end of Putin's cosy relationship with Assad.

Now there's most likely a full agenda for meetings with other players, as he looks to exert his influence in the region and beyond. Assad has been defeated in Syria. What happens next? No doubt it is a million Dollar question. Only time will provide the answer. (With input from - agencies)

**"THERE'S BEEN EXCHANGE IN INTELLIGENCE, THERE HAVE BEEN MILITARY ADVISERS FROM RUSSIA IN SANA'A, AND THERE'S BEEN SOME FIGHTERS FROM THE HOUTHIS REPORTEDLY GOING TO FIGHT IN UKRAINE AS WELL."**



# Entrance Sets The Tone



**CHANDER P MAHAJAN**  
*Was a former student of  
Electrical Engineering at  
Regional Engineering College,  
Naseem Bagh, Srinagar,  
Kashmir (J&K).*



**Entrance at the erstwhile Claremont(Left) and now  
Kirti Estate, Dalhousie(Right) Collections - Chander P Mahajan**

**THE ENTRY POINTS  
INTO THE HOME AND  
TO DIFFERENT ROOMS  
AND DOORS MAKE IT  
SAFE AND SECURE.  
THEY SEPARATE INTERI-  
OR SPACES FOR PRIVACY  
AND CAN WITHSTAND  
CLIMATE CHANGE OR  
CHALLENGES, MAKING  
THEM A RELIABLE AND  
LASTING ADDITION TO  
THE SPACE.**

**D**oors are integral parts of buildings, both functional and aesthetic; though strength and durability is as important.

The entry points into the home and to different rooms and doors make it safe and secure. They separate interior spaces for privacy and can withstand climate change or challenges, making them a reliable and lasting addition to the space.

■ With the rich textures and weathered finishes;

each door tells its own story.

I love traditional doors. To me, it is a blend of timeless beauty and cultural richness. The fascination with antique doors has made a lasting impression on the space around them, adding warmth and positive energy.

The reclaimed doors at Claremont (now Kirti Estate) appear to have been crafted from time-tested dense woods; they maintain their form and beauty





## Doors of Geneva, Switzerland Collections - Chander P Mahajan



## Gates of Geneva, Switzerland and Dalhousie, Chamba Himachal, India Collections - Chander P Mahajan

Aged, the natural patina of these doors creates a striking visual appeal. Crafted, perhaps, from the finest local timbers, these doors embody the richness and antiquity of the 'Chamba State heritage' with a tinge of British styles. On the whole, the door's interior matches its exterior side. The rustic vintage is both functional and simple.

Here the doors enhance the architectural appeal of the structure; besides enabling ventilation.

■ Integrating symbolic elements into a 'sliding door design' brings a deeper significance to the space.

The emblem at the top reflects our eternal love; V stands for Vishav Kirti & I am CP. The fabrication is not merely a sturdy barrier. Besides the aesthetic appeal, it blends functionality with my philosophy; combining timeless elegance with modern design. The locking mechanism is aptly camouflaged.

The components make the overall setup. A blend of steel and polycarbonate (PC), a transparent thermoplastic sheet steals the show. Wrought iron gates are the expensive options when it comes to gate materials, though they rust when exposed to moisture and oxygen in the air.

■ The created opening in the wall is a doorway; a door is an operable barrier. Conventionally, it is a panel that fits into the doorway of a building and the rooms.

Besides helping with climate control by securing passages into the building, doors provide natural

from the days goneby. It has a feel of both rustic elegance and vintage beauty.





The sliding gate, the folding entrance, the reclaimed doors and the lattice door at Kirti Estate and Kirti Cottage.  
Collections - Chander P Mahajan



Entrances to Temples, Grand Homes; and the Gates  
Collections - Chander P Mahajan

light and air to rooms; also contributing to the insulation. Internal doors define space for convenience, privacy, safety, and security. They contribute to the overall architectural appeal of a structure.

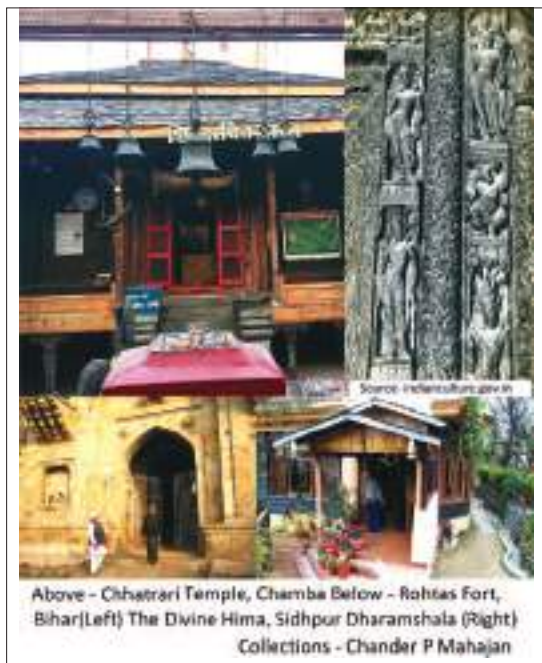
■ So many unique doors adorn temples, palaces, forts, hotels and grand homes. I like the vintage carved wooden door of Chhatrari temple in Chamba.

While in Geneva, the wheels on the gates reminded me of the 'Time Wheels of Buarani' back home.

Wooden door at many a location creates a welcoming entrance. The colour symbolizes positivity and abundance. A clear, visible nameplate outside is believed to attract positive energy. The designs of these doors are deeply inspired by the rich and awe-inspiring Swiss culture, with their value further enhanced by influences from French traditions.

■ A royal antique door can elevate even the simplest home. A well-crafted one offers both style and security. At Rohtas Fort the architecture at the entrance is amazing.

The door may be able to move in various ways (at angles away from



Above - Chhatrari Temple, Chamba Below - Rahtas Fort, Bihar (Left) The Divine Hima, Sidhpur Dharamshala (Right)  
Collections - Chander P Mahajan

the doorway/portal, by sliding on a plane parallel to the frame, by folding in angles on a parallel plane, or by spinning along an axis at the center of the frame) to allow or prevent ingress or egress.

Owing to space constraints, a typical folding door is put in position in the guest bathroom of Kirti Estate.

A door's essential and primary purpose is to provide security by controlling access to the doorway (portal).

Doors are commonly attached by hinges but can move by other means, such as slides or counterbalancing.

The intricate latticework at the entrance door of 'KIRTI COTTAGE' (1984-85), erstwhile "WANSBECK" (1937-38), enthralls me in Khanyara village of Kangra.

The Bahubali main gate at the Secretariat in Telangana has just been removed to the surprise of the locals. A new gate will be built as per Vaastu's stipulations at a whopping amount of money, as reported.

Besides enhancing the ambience and elegance, the entrance sets the tone.





# होनी बहुत बलवान है



कैलाश खोसला

**अ**भिमन्यु के पुत्र, राजा परीक्षित थे। राजा परीक्षित के बाद उन के लड़के जनमेजय राजा बने।

एक दिन जनमेजय वेदव्यास जी के पास बैठे थे। बातों ही बातों में जन्मेजय ने कुछ नाराजगी से वेदव्यास जी से कहा.. कि, जहां आप समर्थ थे, भगवान श्रीकृष्ण थे, भीष्म पितामह, गुरु द्रोणाचार्य कुलगुरु कृपाचार्य जी, धर्मराज युधिष्ठिर, जैसे महान लोग उपस्थित थे.....फिर भी आप महाभारत के युद्ध को होने से नहीं रोक पाए और देखते-देखते अपार जन-धन की हानि हो गई। यदि मैं उस समय रहा होता तो, अपने पुरुषार्थ से इस विनाश को होने से बचा लेता।

अहंकार से भरे जन्मेजय के शब्द सुन कर भी, व्यास जी शांत रहे।

उन्होंने कहा, पुत्र अपने पूर्वजों की क्षमता पर शंका न करो। यह विधि द्वारा निश्चित था, जो बदला नहीं जा सकता था, यदि ऐसा हो सकता तो श्रीकृष्ण में ही इतनी सामर्थ्य थी कि वे युद्ध को रोक सकते थे।

जन्मेजय अपनी बात पर अड़ा रहा और बोला, मैं इस सिद्धांत को नहीं मानता। आप तो भविष्यवक्ता हैं, मेरे जीवन की होने वाली किसी होनी को बताइए...मैं उसे रोककर प्रमाणित कर दूंगा कि विधि का विधान निश्चित नहीं होता।

व्यास जी ने कहा, पुत्र यदि तू यही चाहता है तो सुन....।

कुछ वर्ष बाद तू काले घोड़े पर बैठकर शिकार करने जाएगा दक्षिण दिशा में समुद्र तट पर पहुंचेगा...वहां तुम्हें एक सुंदर स्त्री मिलेगी.. जिसे तू महलों में लाएगा, और उससे विवाह करेगा। मैं तुम को मना करूँगा कि ये सब मत करना लेकिन फिर भी तुम यह सब करोगे। इस के बाद उस लड़की के कहने पर तू एक यज्ञ करेगा..। मैं तुम को आज ही चेता कर रहा हूँ कि उस यज्ञ को तुम वृद्ध ब्राह्मणों से कराना.. लेकिन, वह यज्ञ तुम युवा ब्राह्मणों से कराओगे....

और..

जनमेजय ने हंसते हुए व्यासजी की बात काटते हुए कहा कि, भ्रू आज के बाद काले घोड़े पर ही नहीं बैठूंगा..तो ये सब घटनाएँ घटित ही नहीं होगी।

व्यासजी ने कहा कि, घ्ये सब होगा..और अभी आगे की सुन...पुस यज्ञ मे एक ऐसी घटना घटित होगी....कि तुम, उस रानी के कहने पर उन युवा ब्राह्मणों को प्राण दंड दोगे, जिससे तुझे ब्रह्म हत्या का पाप लगेगा...और..तुझे कुछ रोग होगा.. और वही तेरी मृत्यु का कारण बनेगा। इस घटनाक्रम को रोक सको तो रोक लो।

वेदव्यास जी की बात सुनकर जन्मेजय ने एहतियात वश शिकार पर जाना ही छोड़ दिया। परंतु जब होनी का समय आया तो उसे शिकार पर जाने की बलवती इच्छा हुई। उस ने सोचा कि काला घोड़ा ही लूंगा.. पर उस दिन उसे अस्तबल में काला घोड़ा ही मिला। तब उस ने सोचा कि..मैं दक्षिण दिशा में नहीं जाऊंगा परंतु घोड़ा अनियंत्रित होकर दक्षिण दिशा की ओर गया और समुद्र तट पर पहुंचा वहां पर उसने एक सुंदर स्त्री को देखा, और उस पर मोहित हुआ। जन्मेजय ने सोचा कि इसे लेकर महल में तो जाऊंगा....लेकिन शादी नहीं करूंगा।

परंतु, उसे महलों में लाने के बाद, उसके प्यार में पड़कर उस से विवाह भी कर लिया। फिर रानी के कहने से जन्मेजय द्वारा यज्ञ भी किया गया। उस यज्ञ में युवा ब्राह्मण ही, रक्खे गए।

किसी बात पर युवा ब्राह्मण...रानी पर हंसने लगे। रानी क्रोधित हो गई, और रानी के कहने पर राजा जन्मेजय ने उन्हें प्राण दंड की सजा दे दी.., फलस्वरूप उसे कोढ़ हो गया।

अब जन्मेजय घबरा गया.और तुरंत व्यास जी के पास पहुंचा...और उनसे जीवन बचाने के लिए प्रार्थना करने लगा।

वेदव्यास जी ने कहा कि, षक अंतिम अवसर तेरे प्राण बचाने का और देता हूँ....., मैं तुझे महाभारत



## Motivational Story



## होनी बहुत बलवान है

में हुई घटना का श्रवण कराऊंगा जिसे तुझे श्रद्धा एवं विश्वास के साथ सुनना है..., इससे तेरा कोढ़ मिटता जाएगा।

परंतु यदि किसी भी प्रसंग पर तूने अविश्वास किया.., तो मैं महाभारत का प्रसंग रोक दूंगा..,और फिर मैं भी तेरा जीवन नहीं बचा पाऊंगा...,याद रखना अब तेरे पास यह अंतिम अवसर है।

अब तक जन्मेजय को व्यासजी की बातों पर पूरा विश्वास हो चुका था, इसलिए वह पूरी श्रद्धा और विश्वास से कथा श्रवण करने लगा।

व्यासजी ने कथा आरम्भ करी और जब भीम के बल के वे प्रसंग सुनाए .....,जिसमें भीम ने हाथियों को सूंडों से पकड़कर उन्हें अंतरिक्ष में उछला...,वे हाथी आज भी अंतरिक्ष में घूम रहे हैं.....,तब जन्मेजय अपने आप को रोक नहीं पाया,और बोल उठा कि ये कैसे संभव हो सकता है। मैं नहीं मानता।

व्यास जी ने महाभारत प्रसंग रोक दिया....और कहा..कि,ष्पुत्र मैंने तुझे कितना समझाया...कि अविश्वास मत करना...परंतु तुम अपने स्वभाव को नियंत्रित नहीं कर पाए। क्योंकि यह होनी द्वारा निश्चित

था।

फिर व्यास जी ने अपनी मंत्र शक्ति से आवाहन किया..और वे हाथी पृथ्वी की आकर्षण शक्ति में आकर नीचे गिरने लगे.....तब व्यास जी ने कहा, यह मेरी बात का प्रमाण है।

जितनी मात्रा में जन्मेजय ने श्रद्धा विश्वास से कथा श्रवण की,

उतनी मात्रा में वह उस कुछ रोग से मुक्त हुआ परंतु एक बिंदु रह गया और वही उसकी मृत्यु का कारण बना। सार रू- पहले बनती है तकदीरे फिर बनते हैं शरीर।

कर्म हमारे हाथ में है...लेकिन उस का फल हमारे हाथों में नहीं है।

गीता के 11 वें अध्याय के 33 वे श्लोक में श्री कृष्ण अर्जुन से कहते हैं,षुठ खड़ा हो और अपने कार्य द्वारा यश प्राप्त कर। यह सब तो मेरे द्वारा पहले ही मारे जा चुके हैं तू तो केवल निमित्त बना है।होनी को टाला नहीं जा सकता लेकिन नेक कर्म व ईश्वर नाम जाप से होनी के प्रभाव को कम किया जा सकता है अर्थात् रोग आएंगे परंतु पीड़ा नहीं होगी।

## बस्तर की कांगेर वैली



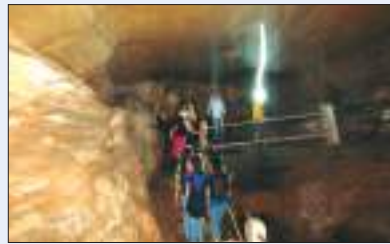
**SANAT JAIN,**  
Secretary General, Chhattisgarh  
United Nations Association, Raipur

छत्तीसगढ़ का बस्तर अपनी प्राकृतिक सौंदर्यता लिए पूरे भारत में प्रसिद्ध है। यह क्षेत्र पहाड़ों, जंगलों एवं जल प्रपातों से घिरा हुआ है। बस्तर की लगभग 65 प्रतिशत आबादी आदिवासी है जिसमें प्रमुख रूप से माडिया, मुरिया, गोंड एवं हलवी

जनजातियां निवास करती हैं। राज्य के अंतिम शासक महाराजा प्रवीण चंद्र भंजदेव थे। बस्तर की सीमाएं ओडिशा, महाराष्ट्र, आंध्र और तेलंगाना से लगती हैं। रायपुर से रोड द्वारा लगभग 300 किलोमीटर दूरी है। दिल्ली एवं रायपुर से हवाई सेवाएं भी उपलब्ध हैं।

बस्तर में कांगेर नदी पर स्थित कांगेर वैली या कांगेर घाटी है। इस घाटी में घने जंगल एवं पहाड़ हैं। एवम इसको कांगेर वैली राष्ट्रीय पार्क कहा जाता है। जिसकी सौंदर्यता देखते ही बनती है।

यहां का चित्रकूट एवं तीरथगढ़ जल प्रपात पूरे देश में प्रसिद्ध है। कुटुंबसर गुफाएं भी अद्भुत हैं जो काफी प्राचीन हैं। इस वैली में वन्यप्राणी जैसे चीता, पैंथर सहित अन्य। प्रजातियां भी प्रचुर मात्रा में। इस कांगेर वैली को देश विदेश से काफी पर्यटक देखने आते हैं। आदिवासियों पर शहरी प्रभाव काफी पड़ा इसलिए नई पीढ़ी शिक्षित हो रही है। घोटुल आदिवासी समुदाय यहां युवक युवतियों को सांस्कृतिक शिक्षा दी जाती है। इस शैली का अध्ययन करने देशी विदेशी लोग आते हैं। सुदूर अंचलों में आदिवासियों के रहन सहन में विशेष बदलाव नहीं आया। शहरों से लगे क्षेत्रों में बदलाव आया है। यहां का सबसे विकसित नगर जगदलपुर है यहां सभी प्रकार की सुविधाएं उपलब्ध हैं।





# Why India's Food Is the Best in the World



**TYLER COWEN**  
*American economist*



I write this from Kerala, on the southwest coast of India, on one of the last days of my eighth trip to this country. I've been to most of its major regions and cities, and over the decades I have traveled to more than 100 countries. All of which is setup for an admittedly bold claim, and one I don't make lightly: India has the best food in the world.

For me, it is common for a random meal here, sometimes costing only a few dollars, to be more enjoyable than one from a starred Michelin restaurant in Paris. In India, the flavors are more vivid; the vegetables are at least as fresh and varied the astonishments more common. Food in India is just flat-out better than most of what you get elsewhere, with the possible exception of China, which I have not visited in several years.

Why is the food so good? I have several overlapping hypotheses, most of them coming from my background as an economist. Interestingly, India's culinary advantages can be traced to some good and some not-so-good aspects of Indian society.



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