

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः
ऋग्वेद -1.89.

Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions in the universe.

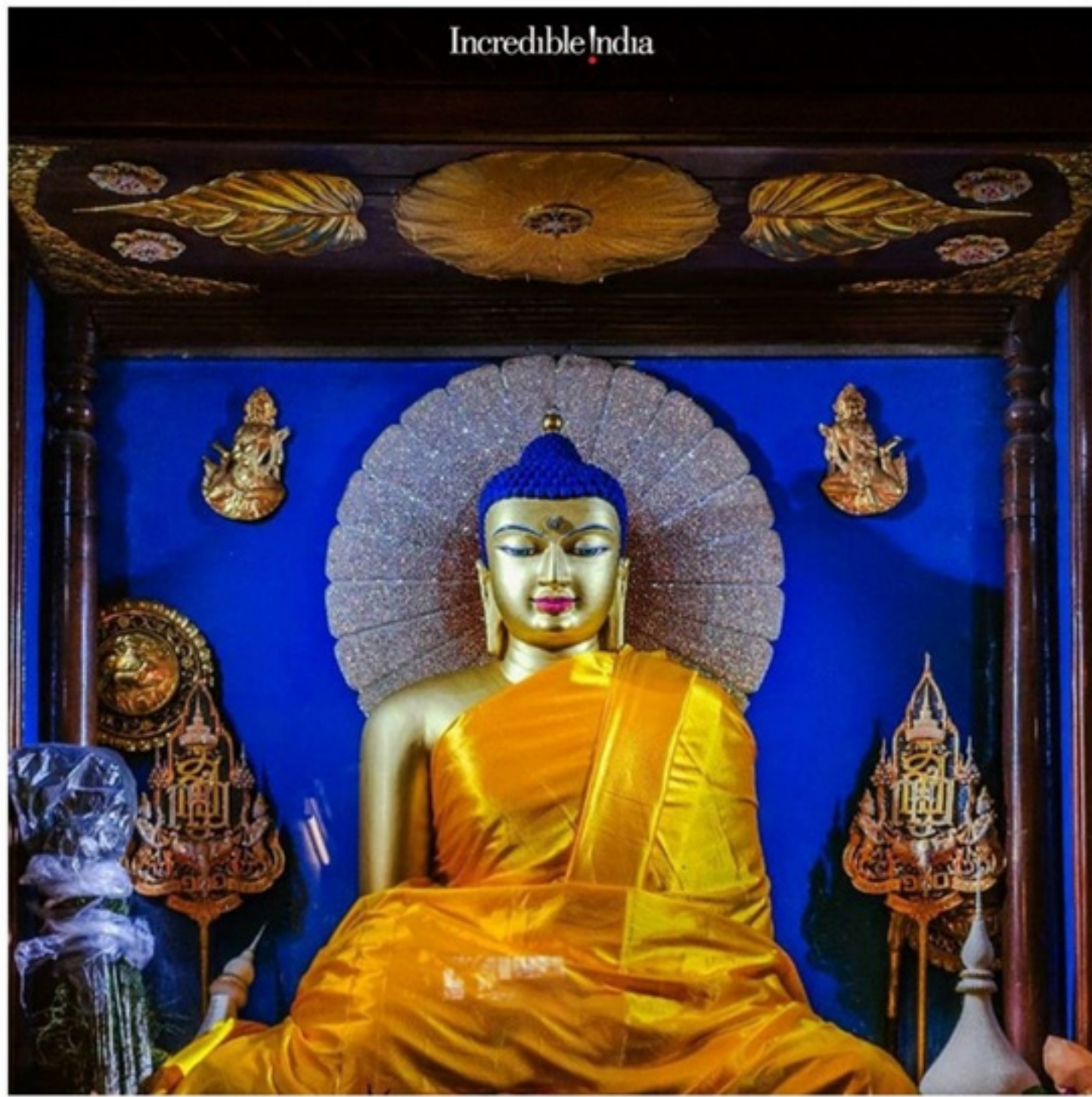
Vol. 29, April 2023

Buddha: the Messenger of Peace

“Buddha!

As the whole world slept, He alone awakened...”

(approximate translation of a Kannada poem by Da. Ra. Bendre)



Mahabodhi Temple, Gaya (Credit: Bihar Tourism)

May 5th 2023 saw the celebration of the Buddha Purnima – the day that commemorates the Buddha's birth, enlightenment (Nirvana) and liberation (Mahaparinirvana). It is a day also to reaffirm the universal values of love and peace. In a world that is engulfed in conflict and turmoil, the Buddhist philosophy offers a ray of hope.

Siddhartha was born into a royal family in Lumbini, in 6th Century BCE, across the border from present-day India, in Nepal. According to legend, when the royal priests predicted that the child would become a great religious leader, Siddhartha's father surrounded him with comfort, to prevent him from treading the path of asceticism. However, when an individual is destined for eternal greatness, when the soul is ripe for liberation, such comforts are but mere chains of earthly bondage.

It took Siddhartha three scenes of human suffering to break himself free from those shackles: old age, disease and death. Anguished, restless, Siddhartha, in the dead of the night, renounced his family, including a new-born son, to move from the transient to the transcendent. Exposing himself to the elements, Siddhartha meditated. Conquering the temptations, with Mother Earth as his witness, he attained Nirvana under a Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, in present-day Bihar. Siddhartha became the Buddha.

With his new found knowledge, Buddha gave his first sermon in Sarnath, in modern Uttar Pradesh, close to the timeless city of Varanasi. The first sermon is called the "Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta," or setting in motion the Wheel of Righteousness. This marked the beginning of Buddhism, which today has about 500 mn adherents globally.

In his teachings, the Buddha focused mainly on suffering or "Dukkha" and addressing that suffering. The core of Buddhist philosophy is based on the Four Noble Truths of the existence of dukkha, the reason for dukkha, the objective of addressing dukkha and the Noble Eightfold Path (Ashtanga Marga) to address it.

In a life spanning eighty years, before he attained Mahaparinirvana in Kushinagar in today's Uttar Pradesh, the Buddha spearheaded not only a religious revolution but also a social revolution. He questioned the orthodoxy. He made spirituality more accessible to common men and women. He allowed women to become part of the monastic order. Through questions and debates in the sanghas, he democratized religious discourse. This creation of a monastic order helped in carrying the message of Buddhism all over the sub-continent as well as across the shores.

The most celebrated disciple of Buddhism in ancient India was Ashoka, the Great. An unparalleled conqueror, the trail of destruction left behind in Battle of Kalinga transformed his heart, leading him to become an adherent of Buddhism and adopting non-violence. Ashoka, who took the title "Devanampiyadasi" (The Beloved Servant of the Lord), went to great lengths to spread the message of Buddhism throughout the extent of his subcontinental empire, including sending his own progeny to modern Sri Lanka, carrying the message of peace and non-violence.

Buddhist philosophy and thought left a deep impression on the art and architecture of the time. Depictions of the life and times of the Buddha, tales from the Jataka in sculptures, paintings etc were widespread. Some of India's celebrated historical sites, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites like the Ajanta Caves, Sanchi Stupa, Nalanda Mahavihara, the Mahabodhi Temple etc., are rooted in the Buddhist tradition.



The Ajanta Caves,
Maharashtra (Credit:
MTDC)



Sanchi Stupa, Madhya
Pradesh (Credit:
MPSTDC)

Global Buddhist Summit 2023

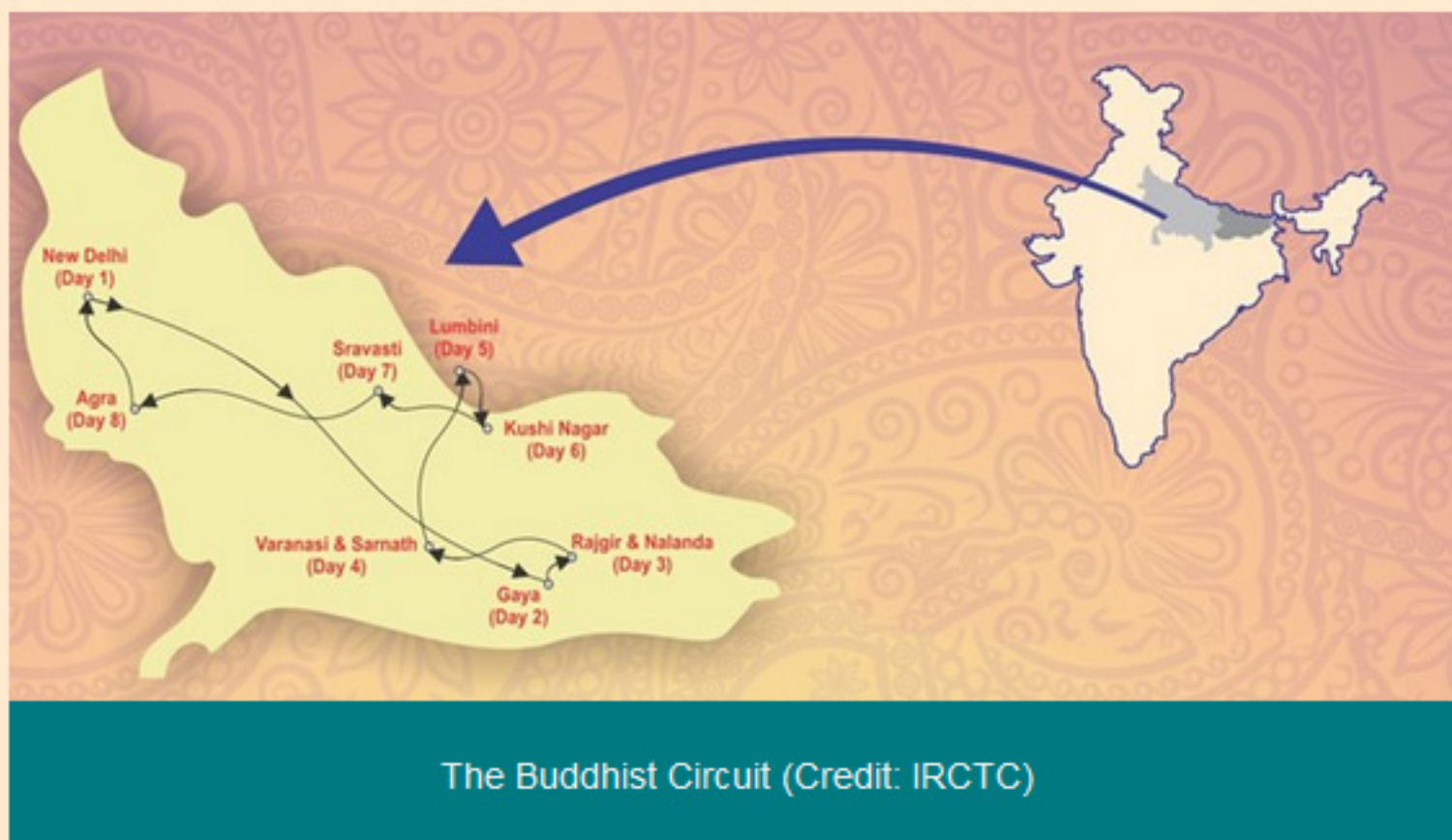
Buddhism today, across various schools, has a large presence in East and South-East Asia. However, it is India which is the cradle of Buddhism. This makes Buddhism one of the most important cultural linkages between India and East, South-East Asia. To leverage India's Buddhist legacy, the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, in collaboration with the International Buddhist Confederation organized the Global Buddhist Summit on 20-21 April, 2023. It saw participation of scholars, Buddhist monks and leaders from 30 countries, like Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam etc. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama also participated in the Summit.

The theme of the Summit was "Responses to Contemporary Challenges: Philosophy to Praxis." Addressing the participants during the inaugural session, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that most of the contemporary global challenges like climate

change, terrorism, war etc., could be addressed through Buddha's teachings. Following the teachings of the Buddha, India considered the sorrow of every human being as its sorrow. It is this understanding that drives India's humanitarian efforts, the most recent being the support extended to earthquake-hit Turkiye and Syria. In the words of the Prime Minister, India has given the world "Buddh" and not "yuddh" (war). The Buddha's compassion is the answer to many conflicts facing us today.

Reinforcing the Prime Minister's message, the Declaration at the end of the two-day Summit said that the Buddhist texts, doctrines and philosophy can guide towards universal peace, harmony, and inter-faith dialogue. While the declaration notes that environmental sustainability is one of the key challenges facing us today, what is left unsaid is that a solution may be found in the Buddhist idea of the "Madhyama Marga" or the Middle Path, balancing between a life of asceticism and unbridled consumerism.

The Declaration also calls on governments to preserve and protect sites of Buddhist pilgrimage as Living Heritage. Government of India has already taken several measures in this regard. To promote the Buddhist heritage in India, the Government in 2015-16 unveiled the "Buddhist Circuit", with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar being the focus states. The most prominent route traverses Bodhgaya, Vaishali, and Rajgir in Bihar, Sarnath, Shravasti, Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh, including a visit to Lumbini in Nepal, just across the border.





Mahaparinirvana Stupa, Kushinagar (Credit: UP Tourism)



Mahaparinirvana Stupa, Kushinagar (Credit: UP Tourism)



Mahabodhi Temple, Gaya
(Credit: Bihar Tourism)



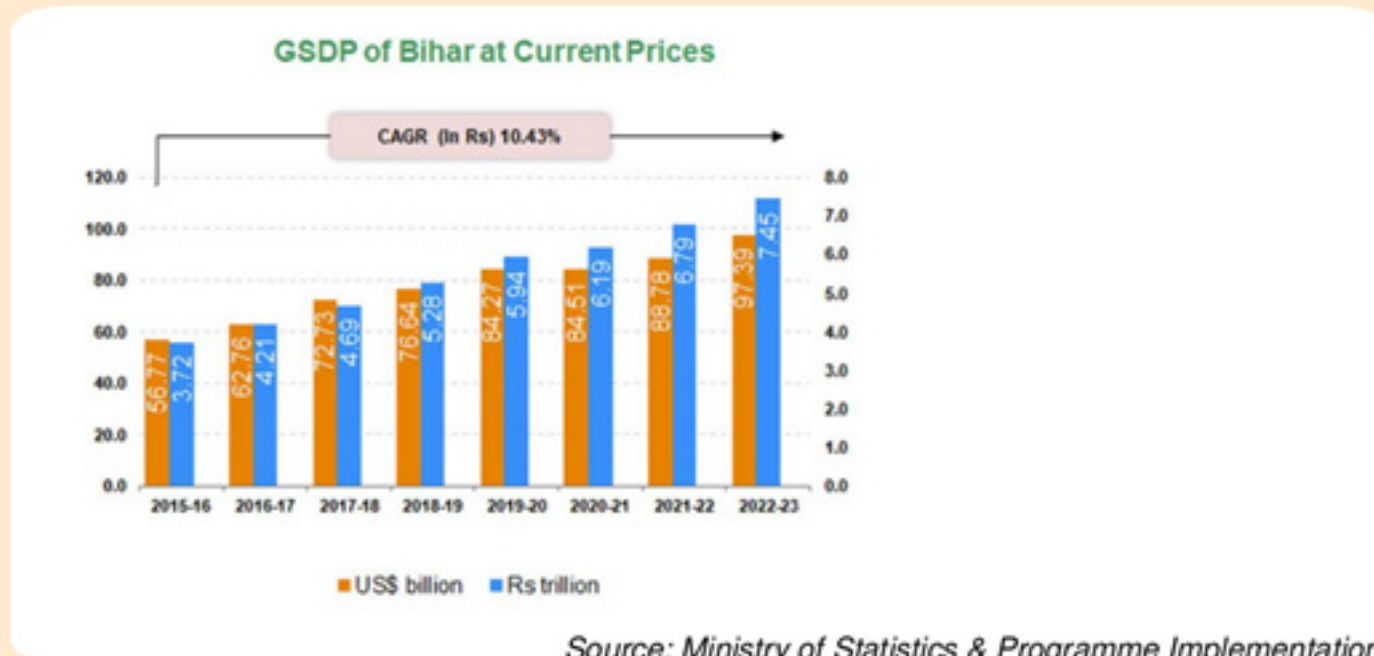
Ruins of Nalanda
Mahavihara

Together with the economic measures and infrastructure development occurring in these states, such initiatives are putting Uttar Pradesh and Bihar on the global tourist map, as well as promoting their potential for investment and growth.

State Spotlight: Bihar and Uttar Pradesh

Bihar

GSDP in 2022-23 was US\$ 97.4 bn, with a CAGR of 10.43% between 2015-23. Bihar is among the fastest growing states in the country and saw a per-capita income growth of 23% between 2016-20.

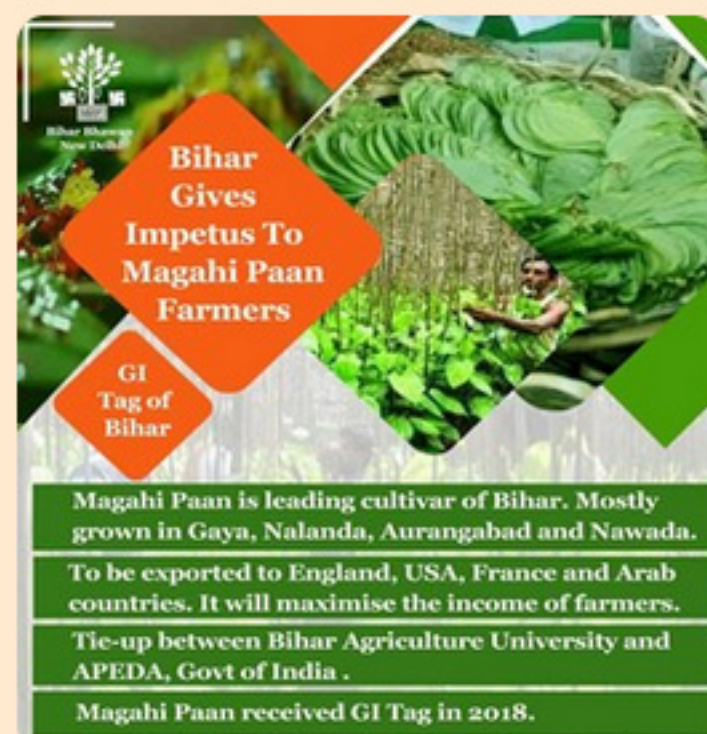


Bihar currently has 68 industrial areas and mega industrial parks.

The location of Bihar and the logistical advantage of the Golden Quadrilateral, Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor and the National Waterway – 1 (between Haldia and Prayagraj) makes it uniquely capable of catering to the markets of eastern India as well as facilitate cross-border trade with Nepal.

Food Processing sector holds a lot of promise in this predominantly agricultural state. It contributed 19.7% of state's GSDP in FY19. Bihar also has the GI Tag for agricultural products like Shahi Lichi from Muzaffarpur, Mithila Makhana, Magahi Paan etc.

Handicrafts and textiles of Bihar are quite famous, like the GI-tagged Khatwa applique work and Bhagalpuri silk. Bihar has a formidable talent pool of more than 100,000 weavers and artisans.





UTTAR PRADESH

Uttar Pradesh is the fifth-largest economy in India, with an ambition of reaching US\$ 1 trillion by 2027. GSDP in 2022-23 was US\$ 140.38 bn.

The population of Uttar Pradesh is higher than 191 countries in the world, making it the 5th largest consumer market in the world and the largest consumer market in India.

With the longest road and rail network in the country, of >248,000 miles and >10000 miles, respectively and revamping of industrial and MSME policies in 2022-23, Uttar Pradesh is poised to become a new engine of growth in India's economy.

The investment opportunities in Uttar Pradesh are immense. Two upcoming defence corridors have a potential of US\$ 6.11 bn. The government plans to develop a 1000-acre Noida Film City, turning it into a preferred destination for film shootings. The Industrial Development Authority intends to acquire 10450 hectares of land to develop industrial areas in the Bundhelkhand region.

In February 2023, Uttar Pradesh held the Global Investor Summit in Lucknow, where 19508 MoUs, worth US\$ 418.75 bn were signed, with a potential to generate 9.3 mn jobs. Renewable Energy, electronics manufacturing and industrial parks saw MoUs worth more than US\$ 40 bn being signed.

Uttar Pradesh also boasts of a plethora of GI-tagged products and is a pioneer in the One-District-One-Product export-promotion scheme.



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metalware
MORADABAD

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Black Clay Pottery

NIZAMABAD AZAMGARH

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terracotta
GORAKHPUR

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The Month That Was:

100th G20 Meeting During India's G20 Presidency



On April 17, India celebrated its 100th G20 meeting, the Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists (MACS) in Varanasi. Over 12,300 delegates from more than 110 nationalities have attended G20-related meetings in 41 cities, covering 28 states and union territories. India will be hosting foreign delegates for over 200 G20-related meetings in around 60 cities across India, the widest geographical spread in any G20 presidency. During its presidency, India is amplifying the voice and concerns of the Global South and developing countries. Over 150 cultural events, showcasing local and national art forms, have been held to display India's diversity and cultural richness.



Narendra Modi 
@narendramodi · [Follow](#)



Guided by the principle of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' and in line with our ethos of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', India's G20 Presidency has worked to further global good and create a better planet.

 **G20 India**  @g20org

India's #G20 Presidency reaches its **100**th event with Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists in #Varanasi today!

Midway in its journey, #G20India is a mass movement that has provided unique experiences to 12000+ delegates & brought the world to every corner of India!

 Recap



The Month That Was:

Prime Minister Modi's 100th Episode of 'Mann Ki Baat'



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi commemorated the 100th episode of his monthly radio program, Mann Ki Baat, which has become a platform for promoting various campaigns such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter), Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) and Amrit Mahotsav (India@75 celebrations). Modi emphasized that Mann Ki Baat has become a unique festival of goodness and positivity of the countrymen, helping him to connect with the common people, and a spiritual journey of his being. He also mentioned individuals who have been engaged in social service for decades, such as planting trees on deserted hills, digging stepwells and ponds for water conservation, teaching underprivileged children, and treating the poor.

In Brussels, the Indian community in Belgium participated enthusiastically in a live screening of 100th Episode of 'Mann Ki Baat' at the Embassy's premises. Ambassador Santosh Jha addressed the gathering and underlined the role of Mann Ki Baat in inspiring people and bringing about societal change and transformation.



The Month That Was: Operation Kaveri in Sudan



The Indian government is conducting 'Operation Kaveri' to evacuate 3,000 Indian citizens from Sudan due to the crisis there. As of April 29, 1,191 passengers have arrived so far, and all passengers will be quarantined for seven days, with rent-free accommodation and free food provided. Of the 117 passengers currently quarantined, it is because they were not vaccinated against Yellow Fever. The numbers of those quarantined will be dynamic based on verification of passengers' passport numbers. 'Operation Kaveri' is being conducted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs.

From the Ambassador's Desk: Meetings and Engagements in April

On 3 April, Ambassador Jha participated in an engaging dialogue with the Political Directors of the European Union (EU) on common global concerns and challenges. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss issues related to the global (dis) order and how democracies can work together to address them. Ambassador Jha expressed his gratitude to the Swedish presidency and the Assistant Secretary-General of the European External Action Service, Enrique Mora, for organizing this productive meeting.



On 25 April, Ambassador held a meeting with Alessandro Chiocchetti, the Secretary-General of the European Parliament in Brussels. The discussions focused on the positive developments in the India-EU Parliamentary relations and explored ways to further enhance it. The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange views and ideas on various aspects of the India-EU relationship.



Ambassador Santosh Jha also had a meeting with MEP Geert Bourgeois at the European Parliament in Brussels. The two discussed the ongoing trade negotiations and the India-EU Trade and Technology Council, focusing on key aspects of the negotiations.



Members of Association of Warehouse Developers of Uttar Pradesh interacted with Ambassador Santosh Jha at the Embassy during their study tour of Belgium and Germany, and discussed the innovative technological solutions in the warehousing industry in India and how India-EU trade can harness it.



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