



Mimansa मीमांसा

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः
ऋग्वेद -1.89.

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

Vol. 35, March 2024

Holi: The Festival of Colours

Holi a festival of joy and gaiety, also known as the Festival of Colors, is an annual celebration in India and throughout the world in devotion of Lord Krishna and it is believed to have originated in ancient India, most likely in the 4th century CE or earlier. It commemorates the return of spring after a long winter and also symbolizes good triumphing over evil. Mostly, Holi is celebrated in the northern part of the country as the festival of colours and on the last full moon in the lunar month of Phalguna.



Holi is celebrated for thousands of years and its origins are rooted in ancient Hindu traditions. This ancient tradition marks the end of winter and honors the triumph of good over evil. Celebrants light bonfires, throw colorful powder called gulal, eat sweets, and dance to traditional folk music. The celebration of Holi usually lasts for two days, with Holika Dahan and a day of throwing colours at each other being its highlights.

Colours of Spirituality

Spiritually, this festival represents the triumph of good over evil, the importance of devotion for the Lord, and an opportunity to transformation in life. Hindus have a long-standing, revered tradition known as Holi. Festival of colour honors Lord Radha Krishna's enduring and deep love of devotion.

However, over the past millennium, many myths have been associated with the celebration of Holi, but the three most commonly recounted ones are of Krishna and Radha, Hiranyakashipu and Prahlada, and Shiva and Kama.

Krishna and Radha

Holi is particularly enjoyed by worshippers of the god Krishna. Its general frivolity is considered to be in imitation of Krishna's play with the gopis (wives and daughters of cowherds) as recounted in the Bhagavata Purana and Gitagovinda. The association of Holi with their playfulness comes from another text called the Garga Samhita. One origin story for Holi's particular color-throwing festivities comes from a legend in which a young Krishna would often ask his foster mother, Yashoda, why he was dark—Krishna and Vishnu are usually depicted as blue, and Krishna is called by the epithet Shyam (“Dark”)—while his beloved Radha's skin was fair. When Yashoda playfully suggested to him that he could smear color on Radha to change her complexion to any color he liked, Krishna went on to play with colors with Radha and the gopis, introducing the festival of Holi. To this day, Holi celebrations in Krishna's birthplace, Mathura, and adjoining regions such as Vrindavan (where Krishna spent his childhood) and Barsana, as well as in many other parts of India, are associated with the legend of Radha and Krishna.



Hiranyakashipu and Prahlada

Another origin story from the Puranas revolves around Hiranyakashipu, a power-hungry demon (a daitya, which is a kind of asura) king who had won a boon from Brahma that he could be killed by neither human nor animal, neither inside nor outside, neither by day nor by night. Hiranyakashipu (Sanskrit: “Golden-Clothed”) wanted everyone in his kingdom to worship him. Ironically, his son Prahlada was an ardent devotee of the god Vishnu and refused to worship his demon father. An enraged Hiranyakashipu enlisted the help of his sister Holika, who was immune to fire—in some variants she has a protective scarf—to kill his son by burning him on a pyre. Her immunity, however, was miraculously transferred to Prahlada because of his devotion to Vishnu. Holika perished in the fire. Later in the story, Vishnu, in the form of lion-man Narasimha, emerged from a pillar and killed Hiranyakashipu at dusk, on the threshold of his palace. This story symbolizes the triumph of good over evil and is remembered on Choti Holi, the day before Holi, by lighting a bonfire that represents the burning of Holika. This ritual is known as Holika Dahan (“Holika’s Burning”).



Shiva and Kama

In southern regions of India, Holi rituals revolve around a myth associated with another Hindu god—Shiva—and his encounter with Kama, the god of love. The Puranic and poetic textual accounts hold that Shiva, saddened by his consort Sati's death, went into deep meditation. Meanwhile, the goddess Parvati—a reincarnation of Sati—engaged in intense meditation to acquire Shiva as her husband, only to be foiled because Shiva was no longer interested in worldly affairs. According to the story as recounted in the *Kumarasambhava* by Kalidasa, the gods were afflicted by the demon Taraka, and they required the son of Shiva and Parvati, to be called Skanda, to kill the demon. Indra, king of the gods, approached Kama for help in diverting Shiva's attentions from celibate meditation to desire for Parvati. When Kama shot his flowery arrow of love to break Shiva's meditation and draw his attention to Parvati, an angered Shiva opened his third eye and burned Kama to

ashes. A distressed Rati, Kama's wife, performed penance and pleaded with Shiva to bring her husband back to life, and Shiva obliged (albeit in disembodied form). The revival of Kama is celebrated as Holi in some parts of India.

Rhythm of seasons

Holi is celebrated at the onset of spring season. The budding of flora is an anticipation to rich harvest for the year. In celebration of these communities, celebrants light bonfires, come together to dance to traditional folk music, smear coloured powder called gulal, throw water balloons and eat sweets at each other. It marks the beginning of spring after a long winter, symbolic of the triumph of good over evil. It is one of the major festivals in India and celebrate the onset of spring, along with good harvests and the fertility of the land.

The Diversity of Holi

- In many parts of India, Holi celebrates the playful and child-like demeanor of Lord Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu and dedicated to him with devotion and love and the mythology states the beginning of the Holi celebration first observed and started in the Barsana region of India including Mathura, Nandgaon, Vrindavan, and Barsana in UTTAR PRADESH (UP) can last between 40 days in some regions and just two days in others represents the Holika Dahan, in North India.

BARSANA is one of the UP state, in the Vraja, or Braj, region of Uttar Pradesh again, celebrations involve a unique, playful battle in which the women of the natal village of Radha, Krishna's eternally devoted lover, pummel the men of Krishna's village with staves; the men defend themselves with shields. This celebration is known as LATHMAR HOLI (*lath* is "stave" in Hindi). In fact, in Barsana as well as in neighboring Mathura and Vrindavan in Braj, Holi celebrations start with BASANT PANCHAMI, a Hindu festival marking the beginning of spring in the month of Magha, and last for 40 days, culminating in the final day of Holi.

Through this period, Holi is celebrated with flowers, staves and shields, and colors. PHULERA DOOJ, a day when Holi is celebrated with flowers, is considered to be an auspicious day.



- BALDEO is one of the state of Uttar Pradesh state close to Vrindavan, Holi is associated not with Lord Krishna but with his brother, BALRAMA. In the account of Krishna's exploits in the BHAGAVATA PURANA, Krishna departs Vrindavan with Balarama, leaving the gopis heartsick for Krishna. According to the story in the Garga Samhita, when Balarama returns on Holi, without Krishna, he is regaled by the people in festivity, he dances with the gopis, and he diverts the YAMUNA RIVER . Balarama's diversion of the Yamuna to flood the fields suggests an association of the festival with agriculture.
- The people of **SIKHISM in PUNJAB**, one of the most known state in North India, celebrate HOLA MOHALLA (**"The Charge of an Army"**) on the day after Holi. Instituted by **GURU GOBIND SINGH**, the celebrations consist of week long displays of Sikh's martial arts, archery, gymnastics, riding, fencing, and music as well as community meals.



- In eastern part of India, WEST BENGAL and **ODISHA**, the celebration of Holi finds the form of **DOLAYATRA** (**"Swing Festival,"** also known as **Dol Jatra** or **Dol Purnima**). Images of Radha and Krishna are placed on decorated

platforms and are swung to the accompaniment of cycles of songs sung only in the spring season. In some places, the images are carried on a palanquin

The festival is known as BASANT UTSAV (“Spring Festival”) in SHANTINIKETAN, native place of NOBEL LAUREATE RABINDRANATH TAGORE, who initiated the tradition of celebrating spring. Students and teachers of VISVA-BHARATI, A UNIVERSITY founded by Tagore, apply colored powders locally known as ABEER on one another and celebrate the occasion with music and joyous cultural performances with blissful experiences.

- The MEITEI community in the northeastern of MANIPUR state celebrates YAOSHANG (*yao* meaning “sheep”, *shang* meaning “hut”) over a period of five days. The celebration playing with colors, burning a thatched hut at dusk, and dancing the *THABAL CHONGBA* (“moonlight dance”), the region’s traditional folk dance folk dance.

In TRIPURA Holi is known as "PALI" which means colour in Tripuri language, it's celebrated all over Tripura.

- In one of the Western states of India- Maharashtra, Holi is celebrated by some communities over two days, much like in North India, and same as celebrated like the day before Holi is Holika Dahan, when bonfires are lit. The day after Holika Dahan, however, is known as DHULIVANDAN (“Paying Tribute to Dust”), and mud, not colored powders, is used on this day. People smear colored powders on one another on Rang Panchami, which is celebrated five days after Holika Dahan. RANG PANCHAMI is also celebrated in parts of MADHYA PRADESH, GUJARAT AND RAJASTHAN states.



- In SOUTH INDIA the ritual is known as KAMA DAHANAM and is associated with the legend of Shiva and Kama. In KONKAN region, encompass the coastal parts of MAHARASHTRA, KERALA, TAMIL NADU, KARNATAKA and GOA, Holi is known as SHIMGA or SHIGMOTSAV, and celebrations can last as long as a fortnight. People believe that God visits their homes on Holi, so brightly

colored palanquins with local deities are carried in processions and brought to people's homes. In Tamil Nadu state, it is known as Kaman Pandigai, Kama Vilas, or Kama Dahanam and features songs of lament from the perspective of Rati. In Kerala state, people celebrate Manjal Kuli by offering prayers in temples and by showering one another with turmeric-colored water. Goa celebrates in the carnival form-like spirit, with colorful parades involved with folk dances, vibrant tableaux depicting themes from Hindu scriptures and epics, and mammoth mythological figures mounted on floats.

The world celebrates Holi and so does the Indian Embassy in Brussels!



The festival of colours, joy and happiness, Holi, was celebrated with full zeal and enthusiasm by the officials of the Indian Embassy in Brussels. Ambassador Saurabh Kumar conveyed his greetings and warm wishes to all on the auspicious occasion of Holi.



A cultural program also took place on the occasion of Holi celebration in the Indian Embassy. Children and staff members displayed their talents and enhanced the colours of the celebrations of the festival. Prize distribution was done by Mrs Smriti Srivastav, Spouse of Ambassador.

The Month That Was:

Telecon between Indian PM and Belgium PM



Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had a telephone conversation on March 26 2024 today with H.E. Mr. Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of Belgium.

Prime Minister congratulated Prime Minister De Croo on recent successful hosting of the First Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels.

Both leaders reviewed the excellent relations between India and Belgium. They discussed ways to further strengthen the bilateral partnership in diverse sectors including trade, investment, clean technologies, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, green hydrogen, IT, defence, ports, among other others.

The two leaders affirmed commitment to further bolster the India - EU Strategic Partnership under the ongoing Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

They exchanged views on regional and global developments. They agreed upon the need to enhance cooperation and support for early restoration of peace and security in the West Asia region and Russia- Ukraine conflict.

The two leaders agreed to remain in touch.

The Month That Was:

State Visit of the President to the Republic of Mauritius

The President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu paid a State Visit to the Republic of Mauritius from 11th to 13th March, 2024 to attend the National Day celebrations of Mauritius on 12th March as the Chief Guest, on the invitation of the Government of Mauritius. A contingent of the Indian Navy participated in the celebrations along with two Ships of the Indian Navy's First Training Squadron - INS Tir and CGS Sarathi.

President Murmu also held bilateral meetings with the President of the Republic of Mauritius, H.E. Mr. Prithvirajsing Roopun and Prime Minister of Mauritius, H.E. Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.



During the visit, President Murmu and Prime Minister Jugnauth jointly inaugurated 14 India-assisted projects, showcasing the growing expanse and multifaceted nature of India's vibrant development partnership with Mauritius that constitutes a key pillar of the bilateral relationship. President Murmu also witnessed the exchange of important bilateral agreements that seek to further strengthen the robust bilateral institutional collaboration and capacity-building cooperation between the two countries.

President Murmu visited the historical and cultural sites, including the Aapravasi Ghat, where Indian indentured labourers first arrived in Mauritius, the Intercontinental Slavery Museum and the sacred Ganga Talao. Additionally, she

addressed Mauritian youth at the University of Mauritius and socio-cultural organisations, members of the Indian diaspora and the Indian community at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute.



The Month That Was:

India - Bhutan : A Relation Beyond Time

Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay visited India on an official visit, which was his first overseas visit after assuming office in February 2024. PM Tobgay met PM Modi and the leaders reviewed the progress in various areas of bilateral partnership, including infrastructure development, connectivity, energy, hydropower cooperation, people to people exchanges and development cooperation. They reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen the special and unique India-Bhutan friendship.

The Prime Minister of Bhutan conveyed his deep appreciation for India's role as a reliable, trusted and valued partner in Bhutan's developmental priorities.



Later on 22nd March, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi received an audience with His Majesty, The Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, in Thimphu, Bhutan. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi became the first foreign leader to be conferred with the Order of the Druk Gyalpo, Bhutan's highest civilian decoration, by His Majesty the King of Bhutan in a public ceremony. Prime Minister underlined that the award was an honour bestowed on the 1.4 billion people of Bharat and a testament to the special and unique ties between the two countries.

The Month That Was:

EAM's visit to Korea

External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, visited the Republic of Korea (ROK) on March 05-06, 2024 for the 10th India-ROK Joint Commission Meeting (JCM), which he co-chaired on 6th March 2024 with his counterpart H.E. Mr. Cho Tae-yul, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During his visit, EAM interacted with many Korean dignitaries and a wide range of interlocutors from all walks of life in ROK. He called on Prime Minister H. E. Mr. Han Duck-soo, and had meetings with Minister of Trade, Industry & Energy H.E. Mr. Ahn Dukgeun, and Director of National Security Office H.E. Mr. Chang Ho-jin . EAM held interactive discussion with heads of Korean think-tanks, academics, business and Indian Diaspora in ROK, sharing views on India's development, foreign policy and potential and prospects for India-ROK relations.



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo

On 5th March, EAM delivered a speech at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy on the theme of "Broadening horizons: India and Korea in the Indo-Pacific", demonstrating how India and the RoK can work together for the peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond by building supply chain resilience,

leveraging complementary technology strengths, and linking geographies through connectivity.

EAM's visit to the RoK, soon after our countries celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations, provided an opportunity to create new pathways to further strengthen the Special Strategic Partnership between the two countries.

The Month That Was:

EAM's visit to Japan

External Affairs Minister of India Dr. S. Jaishankar, paid a visit to Japan on 07-09 March 2024. EAM called on H. E. Mr. Fumio Kishida, Prime Minister of Japan, and conveyed Prime Minister Modi's greetings to him. EAM also briefed PM Kishida about recent developments in India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership, and sought his guidance to further strengthen the relationship.



On 07 March, EAM held the 16th India-Japan Strategic Dialogue with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, H. E. Ms. Yoko Kamikawa, reviewing the broad canvas of India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership, including political exchanges; trade, investment, infrastructure and technology collaboration; developmental coordination; defence and security cooperation; as well as cultural and people-to-people exchanges. The dialogue also covered regional issues of mutual interest in the Indo-Pacific and major global developments.

EAM's visit to Japan provided a timely opportunity to take stock of the ongoing bilateral cooperation and explore ways to qualitatively transform the Special Strategic and Global Partnership between the two countries, in its 10th year.

The Month That Was:

EAM's visit to Singapore, Phillipines and Malaysia

Singapore

External Affairs Minister (EAM), Dr. S. Jaishankar paid an official visit to Singapore from 23-25 March 2024, as first leg of his visit to Singapore, Philippines and Malaysia. EAM had several bilateral engagements with the leadership and senior Ministers of the Cabinet. He called on H.E. Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore and met H.E. Mr. Lawrence Wong, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister. They exchanged views on deepening engagement in the identified pillars of our cooperation including fintech, digitalization, green economy, skills development and food security. EAM also met H.E. Mr. Teo Chee Hean, Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security.



EAM held comprehensive discussions with H.E. Mr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister of Foreign Affairs on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest. EAM also had a productive meeting with H.E. Mr. Gan Kim Yong, Minister of Trade & Industry, focused on bilateral co-operation in Trade and Investment, green energy and food security. He also met H.E. Mr. K Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law to exchange views on strengthening our bilateral partnership.

EAM paid homage to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at the INA marker in Singapore. He met members of the Indian community and interacted with them. He also witnessed a short video on the 'Saga of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose', created by Indian Community members. EAM also attended an event organised by the ISAS (Institute of South Asian Studies), where he interacted with thinktanks and policy makers.

The visit presented an opportunity to further deepen the Strategic Partnership between India and Singapore and to take stock of progress in several areas of cooperation. Singapore is also the current country coordinator for India at ASEAN and was invited as a Guest Country during India's Presidency of the G20 in 2023.

Philippines

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar paid an official visit to Philippines from 25-27 March, 2024. EAM called on H.E. Mr. Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., President of the Philippines and conveyed Prime Minister Modi's greetings to him. He also briefed President Marcos about recent developments in India-Philippines partnership and on the joint initiatives to further fortify bilateral ties.



EAM also met with his counterpart, H.E. Mr. Enrique A. Manalo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Philippines. The two Ministers noted the progress made in bilateral cooperation since the fifth meeting of the Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation held in New Delhi in June 2023 and reviewed the entire spectrum of engagements including political exchanges, trade & investment, defence & maritime security, development partnership, healthcare & medicine, agriculture & food security, education, infrastructure, engagements in new technologies and people-to-people exchanges. They also explored avenues for further strengthening relations between the two countries, while also delving into regional and global issues of mutual interest. It was agreed to hold commemorative events to mark the 75th Anniversary of establishment of bilateral relations.

EAM also met Secretary of National Defense of Philippines, H.E. Mr. Gilbert Teodoro. Both leaders welcomed growing cooperation in defence and maritime security. Substantive discussions were held on consolidating the ongoing momentum in bilateral defence ties through capacity building, joint exercises, information exchange and defence industrial collaboration.

EAM also addressed a gathering of senior officials of the Philippine Government, members of the Philippine Defence Forces and Indian Community on-board the Indian Coast Guard Ship Samudra Paharedar, which is currently on a port call at Manila.

EAM's visit provided a well-timed opportunity to take stock of ongoing engagements and to give further impetus to the flourishing bilateral ties between India and the Philippines.

Malaysia

External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, paid an official visit to Malaysia on 27-28 March 2024.

EAM paid a courtesy call on H.E. YAB Dato' Seri Anwar Bin Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia, and conveyed him greetings on behalf of Prime Minister Modi. He thanked Prime Minister Anwar for his support in deepening bilateral ties under the India-Malaysia Enhanced Strategic Partnership.



EAM held bilateral meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, H.E. Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad Bin Haji Hasan. The two leaders held wide ranging discussions on bilateral cooperation including political, trade and economic, defence, digital, culture and education. They also exchanged views on issues of regional and global interest. EAM also met H.E. YB Gobind Singh Deo, Minister of Digital.

During the visit, EAM held a round-table meeting with the CEOs and leaders of industry. He also interacted with members of the Indian diaspora in Malaysia and praised their contribution towards India-Malaysia ties.

Malaysia is a key partner for India in ASEAN and our Act East Policy. EAM's visit to Malaysia provided an opportunity to reiterate commitment to further develop the Enhanced Strategic Partnership.

The Month That Was:

India - EFTA TEPA : New Meaning to Trade

The India-EFTA Trade & Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) was signed on 10th March 2024. The agreement marks the epitome of India's partnership with Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The negotiations between EFTA and India started in 2008, 21 rounds of negotiations were needed to reach an agreement on 10 March 2024.



TEPA sets out a target of a \$100 billion investment into India from EFTA countries, and consequent one million jobs over a 15-year period. It also provides India the ability to withdraw its tariff concessions if such expected investment is not achieved. The successful conclusion of an FTA with developed countries including Switzerland and Norway is a significant positive signal to the world, showcasing India's firm commitment to trade liberalisation.

The Month That Was:

India Prepares for the Biggest Festival of Democracy

The election commission of India announced the dates of the General Elections for the Lok Sabha (the lower house) of the Indian parliament. The elections for 543 constituency parliamentary constituencies will take place in 7 phases starting from 19th April 2024 and ending on 1st June 2024. The counting of votes will take place on 4th June 2024.



The poster features the Election Commission of India logo at the top left and the India Post logo at the top right. The central text reads: 'चुनाव का पर्व DESH KA GARV LOK SABHA ELECTION 2024'. Below this, it says: 'The Largest Postal Network in the world seeks your active participation in the Electoral Process of the Largest Democracy in the World'. A group of diverse Indian citizens, including men and women of various ages and ethnicities, are shown in the foreground, all making the 'I' hand gesture. At the bottom, a black banner contains the text 'This Lok Sabha Elections, #IVoteForSure'. Below the banner, there are two main calls to action: 'Register online or verify your details at voters.eci.gov.in' and 'Scan & download the Voter Helpline App' with a QR code. The bottom of the poster includes social media handles for Facebook (fb.com/ECI), Instagram (@ecisveep), YouTube (youtube.com/eci), and Twitter (@ecisveep), along with the text 'Election Commission of India'.

भारत निर्वाचन आयोग
Election Commission of India

भारतीय डाक
India Post

चुनाव का पर्व
DESH KA GARV
LOK SABHA ELECTION 2024

The Largest Postal Network in the world seeks your active participation in the Electoral Process of
the Largest Democracy in the World

This Lok Sabha Elections, #IVoteForSure

Register online or verify your details at
voters.eci.gov.in

Scan & download the
Voter Helpline App

fb.com/ECI @ecisveep youtube.com/eci @ecisveep Election Commission of India

India is the biggest democracy in the world with nearly 970 million Indians eligible to vote! Since world's biggest elections are not easy to undertake, there are unique ways of conducting elections which tells the love story of democracy and India. For example, the election commission also set up a voting booth at 15,256 feet (4,650 metres) in a village in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh, making it the highest polling station in the world. A multiparty democracy, India has about 2,660 registered political parties.

From the Ambassador's Desk

Ambassador presents his credentials to His Majesty

Ambassador Shri Saurabh Kumar presented his credentials to His Majesty, King Philippe, the king of Belgium at an elegant ceremony in the Castle of Laeken on March 27, 2023. Ambassador Kumar conveyed the warm greetings of the Indian leadership to the King and his commitment to further strengthen the cordial bilateral ties between India and Belgium.



Chalo India Campaign!

The Indian Embassy in Brussels joined Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the launch of the Chalo India Campaign on 7th March 2024. The campaign is a movement to involve Indians living abroad to be the ambassadors of Indian tourism! The Prime Minister urged each Indian diaspora to motivate their foreign friends to visit and explore the beauty and diversity of India.



At the launch of the #ChaloIndia campaign, Ambassador Saurabh Kumar addressed the Indian diaspora and asked them to actively participate in the Chalo India Campaign.



Indian Embassy celebrates the International Women's Day

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, the Indian Embassy in Brussels recognised the strength, contribution and accomplishments of women in India and beyond.

Ambassador addressed all the women officers and congratulated them on their contribution to the service to the nation and the society showcasing the potential of Nari Shakti.



A memorable visit to the Port of Antwerp

On his first visit to the Port of Antwerp, the ambassador had an interaction with the senior leadership of the port on 15 March, 2024. Both sides discussed the fruitful association of India and Port of Antwerp - Bruges and explored ways to further strengthen growing India - Belgium Trade.



Interaction with the Indian Diaspora

On his visit to Antwerp, the Ambassador paid his respect to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Antwerp.



He also met the members of the Indian community and others;

He visited India Visa Centre in Antwerp and highlighted the role played by the vibrant Indian diaspora in fostering the strength of India-Belgium relations.



Ambassador met Mr Fabian Zuleeg, Chief Executive of EPC-EU on 20th March and discussed the potential to strengthen India - Belgium think tank exchanges & collaborations. Highlighted the need to encourage more conversations on bilateral relations, global challenges & opportunities.



Ambassador met Belgo-Indian Chamber of Commerce&Industry (BICC&I) Chairperson Baron Philippe Vlerick on 28th March, 2024. Both discussed ways to further strengthen India-Belgian trade and commercial ties including in areas of new and clean technologies.



Indian Pavilion at TAVOLA

The small-scale autumn trade fair TAVOLA showcased a selection of hundreds of Indian food and beverage varieties. The ambassador inaugurated the Indian pavilion at TAVOLA fair on 18th March 2024 at Kortrijk Expo. The Indian pavilion displayed the diverse, scintillating flavours of Indian cuisines in the form of aromatic basmati rice, rejuvenating Indian teas, fine Indian wines and delicious Indian species!



First International Nuclear Energy Summit

Brussels hosted the first International Nuclear Energy Summit organised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on 21-22 March, 2024. Around 54 countries participated in the huge conclave to utilise Nuclear Energy sustainably for the future. The Indian delegation was led by Dr. Ajit Kumar, Secretary of the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India. India reiterated the resolve to achieve Net Zero Emission Targets by 2070 and commitment to peaceful use of Nuclear Energy.



CBI India - EuroPol Working Agreement

On 22nd March 2024, another feather was added to the cap of the Indian relations with the European Union under 'Strategic Partnership: Roadmap to 2050'. The EuroPol signed a working agreement with the Central Bureau of Investigation, India. The agreement aims to enhance ongoing cooperation and underscores the value of collaborative efforts in addressing complexities of the modern-day crimes.



Ambassador met Ms. Florence de Fooz, President of the Heartfulness Foundation who briefed about their activities in Belgium and Europe in general, and of their forthcoming activities. Ideas about collaboration were also exchanged.



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