



2
'WILL THIS COUNTRY RUN ON SHARIA?': AMIT SHAH TEARS INTO CONGRESS MANIFESTO



11
NAWAZ SHARIF SET TO BECOME PRESIDENT OF HIS PARTY



16
SRH ENTER IPL RECORD BOOKS FOR MOST SIXES IN SINGLE SEASON

OVER 63% TURNOUT IN PEACEFUL POLLING IN PHASE 2 OF LS POLLS

Tripura records 79.46% polling, Manipur 77.32% and Kerala 65.91%

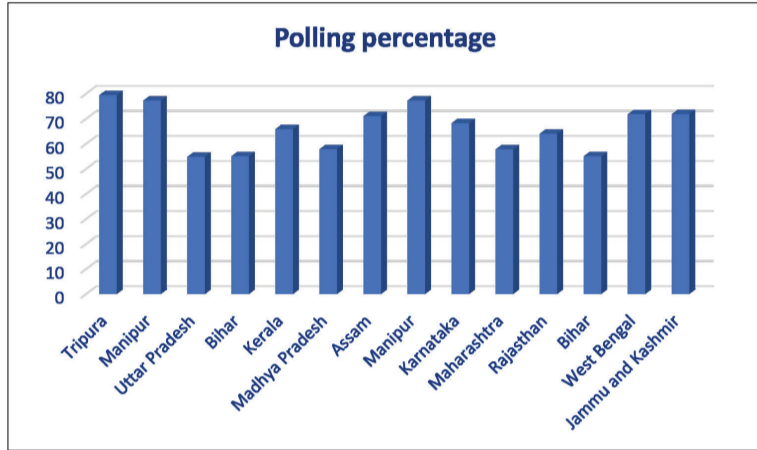
TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Over 63 per cent polling was reported in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections covering 88 seats across 13 states amid few complaints of EVM glitches and bogus voting in some states.

Voters in some villages of Uttar Pradesh's Mathura, Rajasthan's Banswara and Maharashtra's Parbhani were boycotting the polls over various issues but were later persuaded by authorities to cast their franchise.

Polling for the second stage of the seven-phase elections started at 7 am and ended at 6 pm. Several states experienced intense heat conditions. The first phase of polling was held on April 19 in 102 seats across 21 states and Union territories.

The Election Commission (EC) said polling remained largely peaceful. The tentative figure at 8 pm of voter turnout was 63.50 per cent. It is likely to go upwards when reports from all polling stations are obtained, the EC



said, adding voters reaching polling stations till the end of polling hour are allowed to cast their vote.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) under Prime Minister Modi is seeking a stronger majority for a third consecutive term, while the constituents of the opposition INDIA bloc are hoping for a rebound after facing reverses in the 2014 and 2019 elections.

Election Commission data showed the highest voting percentage was re-

corded in Tripura which registered 79.46 per cent polling, followed by Manipur at 77.32 while the turnout was in Uttar Pradesh at 54.85 per cent and Bihar 55.08 per cent.

Polling was held in all 20 seats of Kerala, 14 of the 28 seats in Karnataka, 13 seats in Rajasthan, 8 seats each in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, 6 seats in Madhya Pradesh, 5 seats each in Assam and Bihar, 3 seats each in



SC junks pleas for paper trail of votes cast on EVMs

ASHISH SINHA
NEW DELHI

In a historical judgement, the Supreme Court on Friday rejected a batch pleas seeking a complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with a Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). "Blindly distrusting" any aspect of the system can breed unwarranted scepticism, the court observed.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta delivered two concurring verdicts and dismissed all the pleas in the matter, including those seeking to go back to ballot papers in elections.

The top court, however, issued two directions to the Election Commission of India (ECI). One direction is that after the completion of symbol loading process, the Symbol Loading Unit (SLU) should be sealed in containers. The SLU should



be stored at least for a period of 45 days."

The bench also allowed engineers of the EVM manufacturers to verify the microcontroller of the machines after declaration of the results on the request of candidates who stood second and third.

Request for the verification of the microcontroller can be made within seven days of declaration of the results

After the completion of symbol loading process, the Symbol Loading Unit should be sealed in containers. The SLU should be stored at least for a period of 45 days."

Burnt memory in the micro controller EVM shall be checked by a team of engineers after the declaration of results on a request by candidates and such a request for verification to be made within seven days after the declaration of results.

after payment of fees, the court added.

"If EVM is found tampered during verification, fees paid by the candidates will be refunded," it said.

"While maintaining a balanced perspective is crucial in evaluating systems or institutions, blindly distrusting any aspect of the system

CBI unearths arms cache in Sandeshkhali, calls in NSG

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA

Hours after the West Bengal Government approached the Supreme Court against a Calcutta High Court order directing the CBI to probe allegations of extortion, land grab, and sexual assault from Sandeshkhali against suspended Trinamool Congress leader Sheikh Shahjahan and his associates, the CBI moved into the island and unearthed a cache of foreign-made arms, ammunition and unidentified explosives from the house of a close relative of a Sheikh Shahjahan aide.

This prompted the CBI to call in specialists from the elite National Security Guards (NSG). The NSG commandos moved into Sandeshkhali in full gear, sniffer dogs and deployed a remote-controlled robot to defuse suspected explosives. The Election Commission also demanded a report from the Superintendent of Police of Sandeshkhali.

CBI officials said seven



revolvers, including three foreign-made ones, and a .45 Colt revolver used by the police, were recovered along with 350 cartridges and an unspecified number of bombs and explosives. CBI said documents linked to Sheikh Shahjahan were also recovered during the raid. All the items had been buried inside the floor of the house, the CBI said.

The 10-member team of CBI - which is also investigating the January 5 attack on an Enforcement Directorate team - was conducting a raid on hideouts linked to suspects in that case.

The Trinamool Congress

brushed off allegations of being complicit with the stockpiling of arms and ammunition. "This is nothing but a drama on a day when the second phase of elections is taking place. The aim is to keep the Sandeshkhali issue alive to extract political mileage in the poll season," said Kunal Ghosh, the party's chief spokesperson.

At about 11 am, a 10-member CBI team raided a house in Sandeshkhali's Sarberia area which belongs to Abu Taleb, the relative of a local Trinamool Congress leader, Hafizul Khan. Hafizul is a close associate of Sheikh Sha-

HC to Kejriwal: You placed political interest at a higher pedestal

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday criticised the Delhi government over the issue of non-supply of books to the children studying in MCD schools, saying the continuation of Arvind Kejriwal as the chief minister even after his arrest puts political interest over na-

tional interest. The Delhi government was "interested in appropriation of power", the Court said.

The bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet P S Arora, "I am sorry to say you have placed your interest above the interest of the students, the children that are studying."

DETAILS P5

Tejasvi Surya in a spot of bother as he is booked by ECI

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

Bharatiya Janata Party leader and Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya has been booked for violation of the election code of conduct and "seeking votes" in the name of the religion. "Case is booked against Tejasvi Surya MP and Candidate of Bengaluru South PC on 25.04.24 at Jayanagar PS u/s 123(3) for posting a video in X handle and soliciting votes on the ground of religion," Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka posted on X.

The case has been filed with Jayanagar police station in Bengaluru.

Meanwhile, Vasanth Kumar, Advocate and BJP legal cell Conventor said that five complaints were lodged with the Election Commission today.

"Today 5 complaints were lodged with the Election Commission. One is canvassing and speaking to workers by CM Siddaramaiah inside a polling booth in Mysuru...another complaint is, in a polling booth in Kolar constituency, one ex-councillor Venkatesh is distributing



TDG NETWORK
ARARIA (BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday attacked the I.N.D.I.A bloc over the Supreme Court decision rejecting the plea for 100 per cent VVPAT verification of EVM votes and said every leader of the opposition grouping has "committed the sin" of creating doubts in minds of people about Electronic Voting Machine and "their dreams have been shattered".

Addressing an election rally here, PM Modi alleged

that RJD and Congress alliance in Bihar neither cares about the constitution of India nor about democracy.

"They did not let people exercise their right to vote for decades. Booth capturing was very common... They did not even let the people step out to vote... Now when the poor and honest voters have the strength of EVM, they are trying all they can to get rid of the EVM... Today, the Supreme Court has given a strong verdict saying that

'PM scared, may even shed tears on stage'

AGENCIES
VIJAYAPURA/BALLARI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday took potshots at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his attack on the grand old party, saying he is scared and may even shed tears on the stage.

He called the BJP 'Bharatiya Chombu Party'. Chombu in Kannada means round water pot, which is sometimes used to convey emp-

teness and deception. "You have heard the prime minister's speeches. He is scared. It's possible that he may shed tears on stage," Gandhi said, addressing public meetings in the district headquarters towns of Vijayapura and Ballari.

DETAILS P4

Board exams twice a year from 2025-26, CBSE asked to work on logistics

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Education has asked the CBSE to work out logistics for conducting board exams twice a year from the 2025-26 academic session, according to sources.

The plan for introducing a semester system has been ruled out, they said.

The ministry and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will hold consultations with school principals next month for conducting board exams twice a year, the sources said.



The CBSE is currently in the process of working out the modalities of how will the academic calendar be structured to accommodate another set of board exams without impacting the undergraduate admis-

sion schedule, they said.

"The ministry has asked the CBSE to work on the logistics of how will board exams be conducted twice a year. The board is working out the modalities and a consultation will be organised next month with school principals," a source said.

"The idea being explored is to conduct two editions of the board exams at the end of the year from the 2025-26 academic session but the modalities still need to be worked out. However, there is no plan to implement the semester system," the source

US safe country for Indian students: Ambassador

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

United States is a safe country and it "cares deeply" for the well-being of Indian students, its Ambassador Eric Garcetti said here on Friday and assured their parents that "their children are our children" when they are in the US.

His comments comes in the backdrop of reports of nearly half a dozen deaths of Indian and Indian-origin students in the US since January.

While the US remains a preferred destination for higher studies among Indian students, the string of



such cases has raised concern among the Indo-American community as well as the Indian population. "We care so deeply for the well-being of Indian students in the US. We want parents to know that their

"The US is a safe country. Rhere are a lot of resources to help students. But if they don't reach out, we might not know about the incidents...."

children are our children when they are in United States. And, there is a wealth of resources that can help students prepare...in the US, whether it is mental health... and resources for that being far away from home, parents and families," he said.

While lamenting these tragic deaths in the past few months, the American ambassador to India asserted that "US is a safe country".

Garcetti underlined that students studying abroad should familiarise themselves, have a network, trusted friends, and should know what to do if there is a dangerous situation, or if there is a mental health issue.

He said in a new country it could just be an issue of common sense public safety, and students might not know which neighbourhood to go to and not to go to and at what time of night, as also what resources are there.

INSIDE

POLITICS: SIGNIFICANCE OF PARTY SYMBOLS



Election symbols were introduced in 1951-52 in India mainly to enable illiterate voters identify their candidates.

DETAILS P9

'FOREIGN INVESTMENT NO LONGER ALIGNED WITH GDP GROWTH'

NIVEDITA MUKHERJEE
NEW DELHI

A significant shift has taken place in the global economy with the growth of foreign direct investment (FDI) and global value chains (GVCs) no longer aligned with GDP and trade growth and even amidst rising trade tensions, global GDP and trade, since 2010, have continued to expand at an annual average of 3.4 per cent and 4.2 per cent respectively. In stark contrast, FDI growth has stagnated near zero per cent in the midst of rising protectionism, growing geopolitical tensions and increased investor caution, says the latest UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report "Global economic fracturing and shifting investment patterns" launched on 23rd April.

The report examines the complex landscape of global FDI and sheds light on how over the past two decades, transformative shifts driven by technological advances, policy developments and sustainability demands have reshaped globalisation, compelling FDI patterns to adapt in three key aspects. It emphasises the necessity of integrating sustainability and development into investment strategies and calls for innovative investment strategies to foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Here are some key findings.

Second, notes UNCTAD, there is a widening gap in investment trends between manufacturing and services sectors with investments increasingly leaning towards services. From 2004 to 2023, the share of cross-border greenfield projects in the services sector grew from 66 per cent to 81 per cent and services-related investment within manufacturing industries nearly doubled to about 70 per cent, driven by technological advances. Simultaneously, FDI in manufacturing was stagnating for two decades before going down significantly, with a negative compound annual

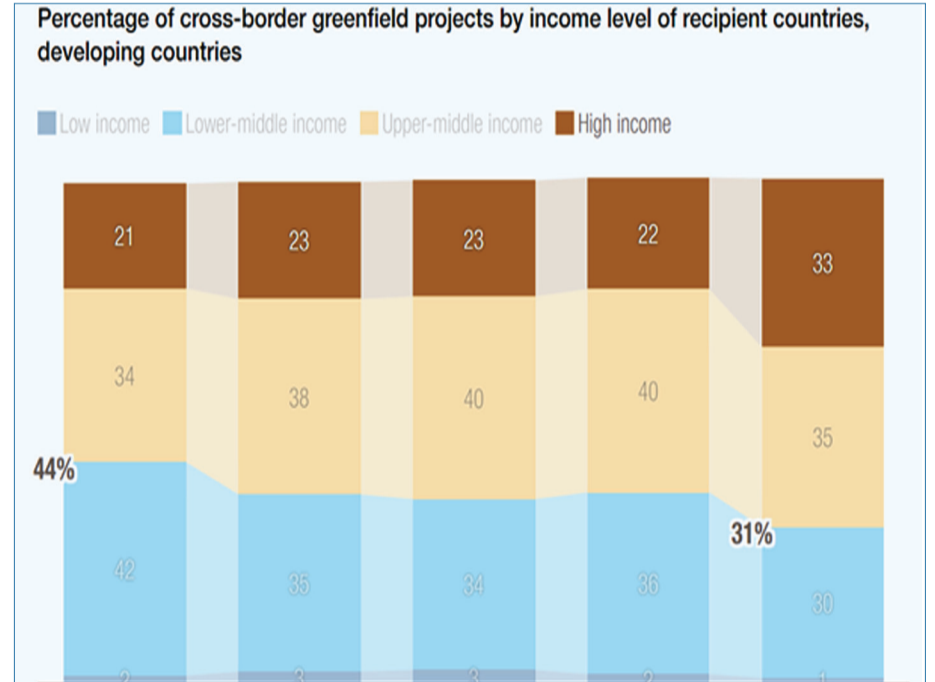
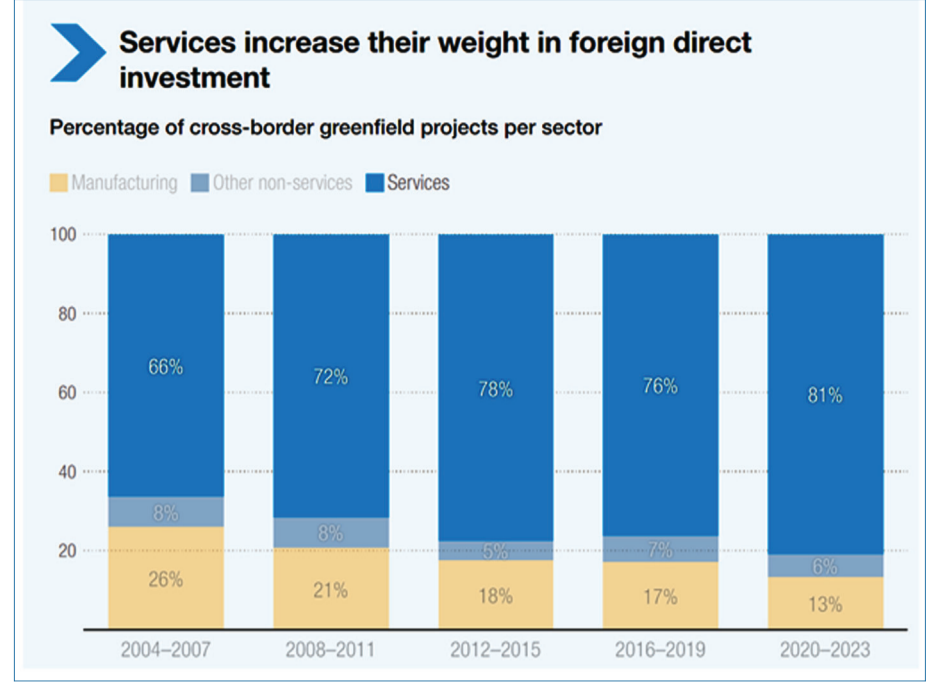
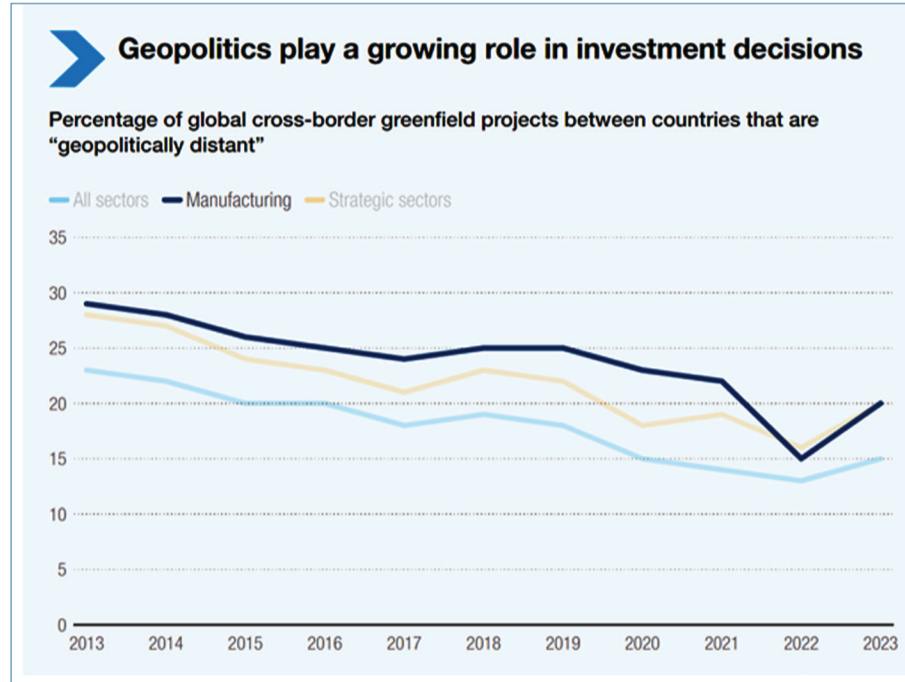
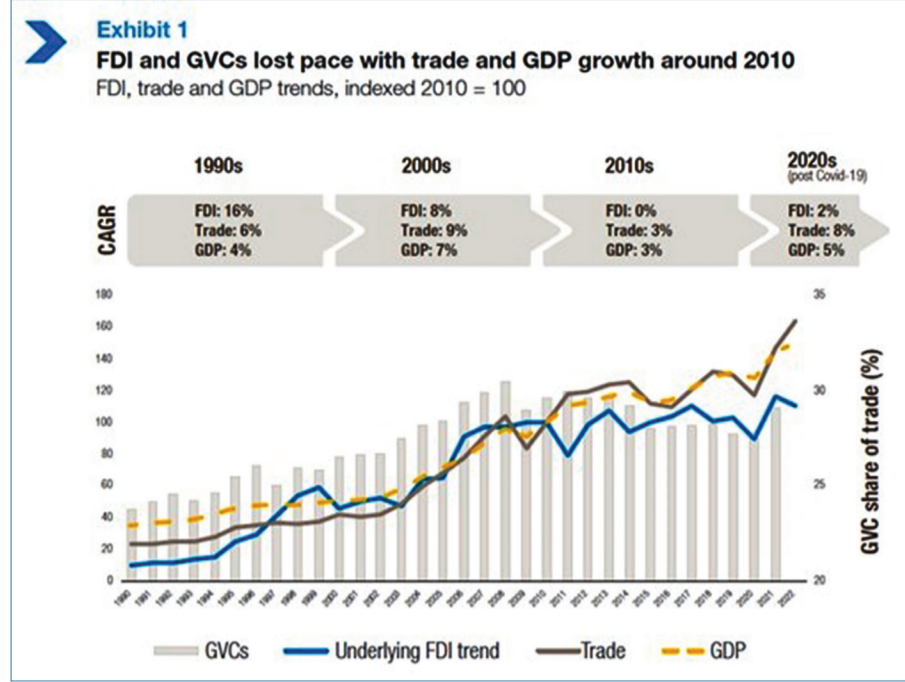
growth rate of -12 per cent in the three years after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The decline in manufacturing has severely impacted smaller economies, hindering their ability to participate in global production, upgrade production methods and adopt new technologies. On the other hand, expansion of the services sector mainly benefits larger developing economies that can effectively compete, creating an imbalance that leaves smaller ones at a disadvantage, accentuating disparities and underscoring the need for policies that provide all developing countries equal opportunities. The decline severely hinders developing economies' efforts to leverage participation in GVCs for economic development and industrial transformation.

The share of cross-border greenfield projects in the services sector rose from about 65% two decades ago to over 80%. And services-related investment within manufacturing industries nearly doubled to about 70%, driven by technological advances.

Meanwhile, FDI in manufacturing has seen a significant downturn, with a compound annual growth rate of -12% in the three years following the outbreak of the pandemic. The decline severely hinders developing economies' efforts to leverage participation in GVCs for economic development and industrial transformation.

A key finding of the report is that investment patterns in China have delinked from the rest of the world with the geography of global FDI being significantly re-shaped by China's reduced role as a recipient country, a process that accelerated after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past three years, the number of greenfield projects to China has hovered at a level around one third the same figure a decade ago. Multinational corporations have shown diminishing enthusiasm for launching new investments in China. However, China continues to play a dominant role in global manufacturing



and trade, suggesting that its "global factory" mode has not downsized but instead transitioned from globally integrated production networks to more domestically focused ones.

The UNCTAD report flags concern over the transition from divergence to fracturing in global investment patterns amidst recent global conflicts and crises which have disrupted usual investment patterns, leading to unstable investment relationships and limited chances to benefit from strategic diversification. The report cautions that FDI decisions are now more frequently influenced by geopolitical

factors, at times overriding economic determinants, complicating standard approaches to investment promotion and hindering FDI-based development. Investments between geopolitically distant countries - those with divergent political interests or foreign policies - decreased from 23 per cent in 2013 to 13 per cent in 2022. This trend particularly affected the manufacturing sector as trade tensions began to escalate in 2019.

The transition from divergence to fracturing and sectoral shifts and geographic rebalancing of FDI offer potential benefits but these are likely to be available only to

a small group of developing economies. Most others face declining manufacturing investment and a shrinking pool of efficiency-seeking, lower value-added projects to leverage for GVC participation. Heightened uncertainty and fracturing are eroding the predictable and open global investment environment upon which they rely to support their development objectives.

The other cause for worry, says UNCTAD is that despite progress toward sustainability and the sustainable development goals (SDGs), impact on developing nations are mixed. The sustainability imperative and

the drive to stimulate investment in the SDGs have opened new opportunities for investment-driven industrial development, particularly in environmental technologies. However, these new opportunities can only compensate in part for the lack of FDI growth in other industrial sectors.

The growing trend of FDI to environmental technologies offers new opportunities but fails to fully address the slowdown in other industries, specially affecting developing and least developed countries increasing the vulnerability of their economies. Investments in environmental

technologies like wind and solar energy have surged. Their share of total greenfield projects in non-services sectors jumped from 1 per cent in the early 2000s to 20 per cent by 2023. Likewise, FDI in the manufacturing of electric vehicles and batteries has seen 27% annual growth over the past decade.

However, this growth only partially offsets the decline in other manufacturing sectors. It also primarily benefits developed countries, while least developed countries (LDCs) continue to struggle with reduced FDI in traditional sectors.

Given the imperative to bridge investment dispari-

ties across sectors and regions, UNCTAD has called for immediate action to ensure that the benefits of investment are distributed more equitably and aligned with overarching developmental objectives. The key policy recommendations from UN Trade and Development underline the need for developing countries to revise their economic development strategies and calls on global policymakers, business leaders, and development agencies to enhance collaboration at global and regional level and work towards a more open and fairer global investment environment.

INDIA NEWS SURVEY Manmohan Singh Statement		Male	95%
Date: 26th April 2024		Female	5%
Q-1 Muslims have the first right on the country's resources, what will be the impact of the controversy over Manmohan Singh's statement?			
A- BJP benefits		48.00%	
B- Benefit to Congress		16.00%	
C- There will be no effect		34.00%	
D- Can't say		2.00%	
Grand Total		100%	
Q-2 Were Muslim appeasement policies made during the tenure of Congress?			
A- Yes		64.00%	
B- No		34.00%	
C- Can't say		2.00%	
Grand Total		100%	
Q-3 Who is benefiting in the elections from Owaisi's statements like eliminating the devils?			
A- AIMIM		4.00%	
B- BJP		52.00%	
C- Congress		20.00%	
D- Regional party		12.00%	
E- Can't say		12.00%	
Grand Total		100%	
Q-4 What action should the Election Commission take on Hindu-Muslim political statements?			
A- Stop the publicity campaign		14.00%	
B- Stopped from contesting elections		13.00%	
C- Take legal action		65.00%	
D- Can't say		8.00%	
Grand Total		100%	

INDIA NEWS SURVEY DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OF LEADERS		Male	95%
Date: 26th April 2024		Female	5%
Q-1 What is your opinion on the abusive language of big leaders in election rallies?			
A- Very shameful		35.00%	
B- Attempt to polarize		9.00%	
C- Provocative agenda		50.00%	
D- Can't say		6.00%	
Grand Total		100%	
Q-2 Which leader needs to control his language more on election platforms?			
A- BJP leader		21.00%	
B- Congress leader		28.00%	
C- TMC leader		5.00%	
D- AIMIM leader		6.00%	
E- Leaders of all parties		40.00%	
F- can't say		0.00%	
Q-3 On whom should action be taken to control the bad words of leaders?			
A- Action on the leader		50.00%	
B- Action on party president		21.00%	
C- Action against election officer		26.00%	
D- Can't say		3.00%	
Grand Total		100%	
Q-4 Does the Election Commission seem capable of controlling bad speech?			
A- Yes		36.00%	
B- No		50.00%	
C- Delay in action		11.00%	
D- Can't say		3.00%	
Q-5 Which type of speech from election platforms has the greatest impact on voters?			
A- Aggressive speech		19.00%	
B- Passionate speech		30.00%	
C- Factual speech		17.00%	
D- Religious speech		20.00%	
E- Cannot say		14.00%	
Grand Total		100%	

POLITICS: SIGNIFICANCE OF PARTY SYMBOLS

Election symbols were introduced in 1951-52 in India mainly to enable illiterate voters identify their candidates. They have gone through several changes, leading to monumental shift in Indian politics.

TDG NETWORK

The history of Indian election symbols is intertwined with the evolution of democracy in the country. Election symbols are a critical component of elections. They are a party's identity, and help voters recognise candidates. When parties split, a battle is fought for its election symbol. During the initial years of Indian elections post-independence, candidates and political parties often used a variety of symbols, including animals, objects, and religious symbols, to represent themselves on the ballot.

The choice of symbols was often arbitrary and varied widely, leading to confusion among voters and challenges in ensuring fair representation.

Today, we will provide insights on the introduction and journey of political parties' symbols that play a pivotal role in the successful functioning of the elections in the country. Here's a chronological overview

Introduction of Election Symbols: Before the first Lok Sabha election of 1951-52, the Election Commission of India realised that election symbols were critical in a country where the literacy rate was less than 20%. It made the the Commission to introduce the concept of election symbols to streamline the electoral process and make it more accessible to voters.

The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, established a formal system for the allotment of symbols to recognized political parties and independent candidates.

Recognition of Political Parties: Political parties seeking recognition from the Election Commission were required to register unique symbols that would represent them in elections.

Recognized national and state-level parties were allotted permanent symbols, while other registered parties were allotted temporary symbols for each election cycle.

The Role of Symbols in Indian Politics: Election symbols became an integral part of Indian political culture, serving as visual identifiers for candidates and parties on the ballot.

Symbols played a crucial role in enhancing voter awareness and facilitating the participation of illiterate voters who could identify candidates by their symbols.

Symbol Allotment Process: The Election Commission developed a comprehensive system for the allotment of symbols, ensuring fairness and transparency in the process.

Symbols were allotted based on the preferences of recognized political parties, with the Election Commission maintaining a registry of available symbols and their corresponding parties.

Election symbols in India serve as potent symbols of identity and ideology for political parties and candidates. They encapsulate the values, beliefs, and aspirations of the parties they represent.

Symbols often carry cultural, historical, or regional significance, resonating with specific segments of the electorate.

Symbolic Significance: Many election symbols in India carry symbolic significance and resonate with vot-



in controversies, with parties engaging in disputes over symbol allocation and infringement.

Symbol disputes can lead to legal battles and even impact election outcomes in some cases.

Regional and National Symbols: While some election symbols have nationwide recognition, others are specific to certain regions or communities. This diversity reflects India's pluralistic society and ensures representation for various identities in the political arena.

For example, the "two leaves" symbol is associated with the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party in Tamil Nadu, while the "cycle" symbol represents the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh.

Impact on Voter Behavior: Research suggests that elec-

Satirical Use of Symbols: In some instances, political parties and candidates use election symbols creatively for satirical or humorous purposes. Satirical symbols and campaign slogans are employed to critique opponents or highlight social issues in a lighthearted manner.

Satirical symbolism adds an element of wit and irony to the electoral discourse, engaging voters and sparking conversations about political issues.

Innovation and Modernization: With advancements in technology and communication, political parties are increasingly leveraging digital platforms and multimedia channels to amplify their symbols and reach voters.

Parties use animated logos, social media filters, and interactive campaigns to modernize their symbol representation and connect with tech-savvy voters.

International Comparisons: The concept of election symbols is not unique to India and exists in various forms in democracies around the world. However, the cultural and historical contexts of symbols differ across countries, reflecting their respective political landscapes and traditions.

Comparative studies of election symbols offer insights into the role of visual communication in electoral politics and the dynamics of political branding on a global scale.

In essence, Indian election symbols are dynamic and multifaceted elements of the country's electoral process, influencing voter perceptions, shaping political identities, and reflecting the rich diversity of Indian democracy.

Changing Symbols: The Congress' first election symbol was a pair of yoked bullocks. The pair of bullocks was a representation of the agrarian economy inspired Indira Gandhi when she set up her own rival faction in 1969.

After being expelled from the party in 1969 by then Congress president S. Nijalingappa, Gandhi formed the Indian National Congress (Requisitionists). As dispute over the symbol (yoked pair of bullocks) arose, Indira Gandhi's faction was allotted the symbol of a 'cow nursing her calf'. As the Indira Gandhi faction contested elections under this new symbol, its rival faction and other Opposition parties raised objection claiming that the image of cow was being used to appeal to the Hindu religious sentiments.

Post Emergency, as Gandhi sought to regain electoral power in the ensuing elections, after facing defeat at the hands of the Janata Party led by Morarji Desai. Declaring the party under her command as the "real Congress", Indira Gandhi announced the formation of Congress (Indira). With her 'calf and cow' symbol frozen following a 1979 split, Indira Gandhi was on the lookout for a new symbol, and was given the choice between several symbols by Election Commission, one of which was the hand.

As per the political experts, it was the story of the Kaipathy temple or hand temple at Kallekulangara that inspired Indira Gandhi to settle on the 'Hand' symbol.

The election symbol of the BJP, too, has changed over the years. From 1951 to 1977, the BJP (erstwhile) had oil lamp as its election symbol.

Indian election symbols are not just visual markers on the ballot but integral components of the country's democratic fabric. They embody the rich tapestry of India's political landscape, serving as symbols of identity, empowerment, and representation for millions of voters across the nation.



In 1977, when it merged with other political parties to form Janata Party, it chose a farmer and plough symbol to represent it. Three years later, when the Janata party

and the party's focus on the common people. **Indian National Congress (INC) - Hand:** The open hand symbol of the Congress party has historical roots dating

while the star symbolizes the party's goal of achieving a socialist society.

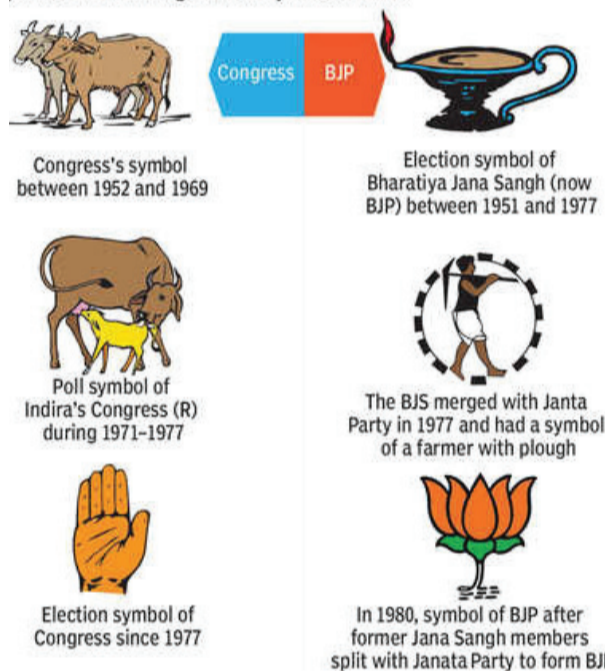
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - Lotus: The lotus holds significant cultural and religious symbolism in India, often associated with purity, enlightenment, and prosperity. The BJP adopted the lotus as its symbol to signify its commitment to cultural nationalism and Hindu values.

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) - Broom: The AAP's choice of a broom as its symbol is rooted in its anti-corruption stance. The broom symbolizes the party's mission to clean up politics and sweep away corruption from the Indian political landscape.

Shiv Sena - Bow and Arrow: The bow and arrow symbolize Shiv Sena's aggressive stance in defending the rights and interests of the Marathi-speaking people of

Changing Symbols

Since the first general elections, the two largest national parties have changed their symbols thrice



symbols enjoy legal protections under Indian electoral law. Unauthorized use or misrepresentation of election symbols is prohibited and can result in legal consequences.

The Election Commission closely monitors the use of symbols during elections to ensure compliance with regulations and prevent electoral malpractice.

Symbolism and Regional Diversity: India's diverse cultural landscape is reflected in the wide array of election symbols representing various regions, communities, and identities.

Symbols often draw inspiration from local flora, fauna, folklore, and historical landmarks, fostering a sense of regional pride and belonging among voters.

Evolving Symbolism: The symbolism associated with election symbols can evolve over time in response to changing social, political, and cultural dynamics.

Parties may reinterpret or rebrand their symbols to resonate with contemporary issues and appeal to new generations of voters.

Symbolic Controversies: Election symbols have occasionally been embroiled

tion symbols can influence voter behavior and decision-making. Voters may develop emotional connections with certain symbols or associate them with particular parties or leaders.

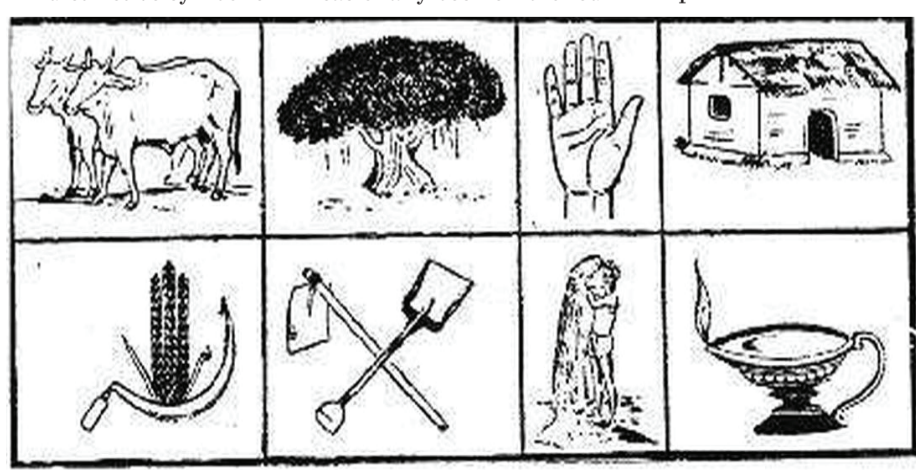
Candidates often strategically choose symbols that evoke positive emotions or resonate with the cultural and social context of their constituency to garner support.

Dynamic Symbol Allotment: The Election Commission periodically reviews and updates the list of reserved symbols to accommodate new parties and changing political dynamics.

Symbols may be retired, replaced, or re-allocated based on requests from parties and emerging electoral trends.

Role in Coalition Politics: In coalition politics, the allocation of symbols can be a contentious issue among alliance partners. Parties negotiate symbol-sharing agreements to maintain their individual identities while contesting elections together.

Symbol-sharing arrangements often involve compromises and strategic considerations to ensure equitable representation for all coalition partners.



dissolved and the BJP was formed, lotus was adopted as its election symbol.

AtalBihari Vajpayee at a rally in Bombay in 1980 made the following prediction. "Andhera chhatega, sooraj niklega, kamal khilega" (The darkness will give way to light, the sun will come up, and the lotus will bloom). He was of course referring to the formation of the Bharatiya Janata Party on April 6, 1980. Vajpayee's choice of the lotus matched the new party's nationalist ideologies.

INTERESTING FACTS

Indian political parties often choose symbols that resonate with their ideologies or regional identities. Here are some interesting facts about some of these symbols:

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) - Elephant: The BSP's choice of an elephant as its symbol is inspired by the significance of elephants in Indian culture and mythology. Elephants are revered for their strength, wisdom, and loyalty, qualities that the party aspires to embody.

All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) - Flowers and Grass: TMC's symbol represents the unity of rural and urban interests. The flowers symbolize beauty and prosperity, while the grass signifies the grassroots move-

back to the Indian independence movement.

It was initially chosen to represent the party's commitment to serving the people and fighting for their rights.

Communist Party of India (CPI) - Sickle and Star: The CPI's symbol reflects its socialist ideology and its alignment with the interests of farmers and workers. The sickle represents agriculture,

Maharashtra. It reflects the party's militant origins and its commitment to regional identity politics.

These symbols play a crucial role in Indian elections, especially in rural areas where literacy rates may be low. They help voters identify their preferred parties on the ballot paper and serve as a powerful visual representation of political ideologies and agendas.

CRESCENT MOON



A crescent moon over Jemaa el-Fnaa, the city's main square, Marrakech, Morocco. Photo: Agencies

URGENT UN REFORMS IMPERATIVE TO REFLECT CURRENT REALITIES: INDIA

AGENCIES
UNITED NATION

India has said that the revitalisation of the UN General Assembly must be seen in the wider context of the overall reform of the United Nations, including the Security Council, ensuring that it reflects the current geopolitical realities and can meet increasingly complex challenges.

"India has always been of the view that the General Assembly can be revitalised only when its position as the primary deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations is respected in letter and spirit," Minister at India's Permanent Mission to the UN, Pratik Mathur said.

Addressing the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalisation of the Work of the General Assembly on Thursday, Mathur said that the revitalisation of the 193-member General Assembly must also be seen in the wider context of the overall reform of the UN.

"It is our firm belief that the urgent and comprehensive UN reform, including of the Security Council, is imperative to make it reflective of current geopolitical realities and enhance its capability to meet increasingly complex challenges of our time," he said.

The UN's success rests on the effectiveness of the General Assembly in carrying out its role as its chief deliberative and policy-making body as envisaged in the UN Charter, Mathur said.



Minister at India's Permanent Mission to the UN, Pratik Mathur

India gave a clarion call to make this reform of global governance architecture — that is fit for purpose for the 21st century — a reality in the 'Pact of the Future' that Member States are currently negotiating ahead of the Summit of the Future to be held in September, during the high-level UN General Assembly session.

Mathur said that with the proliferation of the agenda

of the General Assembly, the Annual General Debate is gradually turning out to be one of the several high-level events that take place at the start of each new session of the General Assembly.

"The Annual General Debate has a special place in the annual agenda of the UN, and we should not let it be equated with various high-level events which do not enjoy the participation of all member states," he said.

Mathur said that India believes that for the revitalisation of the General Assembly, the sanctity of the Annual General Debate and its associated elements must be restored.

He further noted that the essence of the General Assembly is in its intergovernmental nature.

Indian-origin man killed in US by police while detesting arrest

AGENCIES
NEW YORK

A 42-year-old Indian-origin man in the US was shot and killed by police in San Antonio after he struck two officers with his vehicle as they were trying to arrest him in connection with an aggravated assault case against a woman.

Sachin Kumar Sahoo was pronounced deceased at the scene after police officer Tyler Turner shot at him on April 21 in San Antonio, a city in Texas.

The Bexar County Medical Examiner's Office said Sachin Kumar Sahoo died from multiple gunshot wounds during last weekend's altercation with police, the San Antonio Express-News reported.

Sahoo originally hailed from Uttar Pradesh. Sources said he could have been a naturalised US citizen.

According to a preliminary investigation, just before 6:30 pm on April 21, officers were dispatched to a home in Cheviot Heights in San Antonio for a report about Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon, the San Antonio Police Department said in a statement to PTI.

Upon arrival, officers found a 51-year-old female who had been intentionally struck by a vehicle. The suspect, Sahoo, had fled the location. The victim was transported to a local hospital in critical condition. San Antonio Police Detectives issued a felony arrest warrant for Sahoo in that incident.

93 people arrested at Southern California University amid anti-Israel protests

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

As protests against Israel mount in US universities, 93 people have been arrested on suspicion of trespassing during Wednesday's demonstrations at the University of Southern California.

The Los Angeles Police Department informed that 93 people were arrested at the University of Southern California.

"The university is a private campus and the group had been violating some of their orders. It was a trespass at that point and we assisted with the arrests," Los Angeles Police Captain Kelly Muniz said during a briefing.

Moreover, one person was also arrested for assault with a deadly weapon, Muniz said, as CNN reported.

No protesters or officers



have been reported injured, police said.

The USC Department of Public Safety ordered protesters gathering at the campus' Alumni Park on Wednesday afternoon to disperse or face arrest for trespassing, reported CNN.

According to a university official, tensions escalated during the demonstrations, as at one time, protesters re-

demonstrations sparked by pro-Palestinian sentiments at major American universities, it is reported.

Protesters at Columbia University, where demonstrations ignited last week, demand the severance of ties with Israeli academic institutions and a complete divestment from entities linked to Israel amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict.

House Speaker Mike Johnson emphasised the need for order on campus, stating that if the university president cannot restore calm, she should resign. However, student reactions to this call for resignation are varied, with some expressing willingness to continue working with her.

However, over 30 arrests were made during protests at the University of Texas in Austin.

World's first skin cancer vaccine gets 1st patient in UK

AGENCIES
LONDON

An international clinical trial testing a novel cancer immunotherapy, which may prevent skin cancer from recurring, has recruited its first patient in Britain this week. The mRNA-based technology, the vaccine tech used for some COVID vaccinations, is aimed at people who have already had high-risk melanomas the most serious form of cancer removed.

For the trial, University College London Hospitals (UCLH) doctors are giving it alongside another drug, pembrolizumab or Key-

truda, that also helps the immune system kill cancer cells.

One of the first patients to sign up for the trial is British musician Steve Young, 52, from Hertfordshire, east England, who was diagnosed with stage II melanoma, which was removed.

"I feel lucky to be part of this clinical trial. Of course, I did not feel so lucky when I was diagnosed with skin cancer, in fact, it came as quite a shock, but now that I've had treatment, I'm keen to ensure it does not recur. This is my best chance at stopping the cancer in its tracks," Young said.



The personalised treatment works by instructing the body to make up to 34 proteins, each targeting neoantigens identified by gene sequencing and thought to be driving the cancer in that particular patient. The neoantigens are proteins found only on the cancer cells, and the individualised neoantigen therapy is designed to

prime the immune system to attack the tumour cells in each patient, while Keytruda blocks an immunological brake that protects the cancer.

"The idea behind this immunotherapy is that, by prompting the body to make these proteins, it can prepare the immune system to quickly identify and attack any cancer cells bearing them, with the aim of preventing recurrence of melanoma," said University College London medical oncologist Heather Shaw, the national coordinating investigator of the new trial.

The new Phase 3 clinical trial, being led by UCLH, is

Romania indicts ex-president Iliescu again over 1990 crackdown

AGENCIES
BUCHAREST

Romanian prosecutors Friday issued a fresh indictment against former president Ion Iliescu for crimes against humanity in a deadly 1990 crackdown on protesters, the latest of several proceedings against him.

Four people were killed in June 1990 after Iliescu allegedly called in thousands of miners to help police put down the demonstration, just months after the execution of the communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.



Repeated investigations into the violent crushing of the anti-communist protest have been dragging on for two decades.

First accused in 2005, the former president was ordered to stand trial in the case in 2017, but charges were dropped on procedural grounds and the investigation was later reopened.

Military prosecutors said in a statement on Friday they had ordered "the continuation of the criminal proceedings against Iliescu... on the charge of committing crimes against humanity".

Besides the four dead, two people were raped, more than 1,300 injured and some 1,200 unlawfully deprived of their liberty "on political grounds", the prosecutors said.

Iliescu, now 94, was informed of the charges against him at his home in Bucharest and could face up to 25 years in prison.

MUIZZU'S WIN IN MALDIVES, ISRAEL-HAMAS ESCALATION, IRAN-PAKISTAN ON KASHMIR

This week fetched couple of challenges for global affairs with intensified violence between Israel and Iran on one hand while Israel and Hamas on the other; despite continuous requests and directives from the global community to announce a ceasefire immediately; and the recent resounding success of the Muizzu government in Malé bringing a clear indication of a critical shift in the political landscape of Maldives and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Defying various political analyses, the recent resounding success of the Muizzu government in the parliamentary elections of Maldives clearly indicates a critical shift in the political landscape of not only Maldives but also of the overall IOR. Just six months after

Mohamed Muizzu assumed office as the president, Maldives once again casted its votes last week, resulting in a decisive majority for the ruling coalition in the parliament. Muizzu's People's National Congress secured 66 out of the 93 seats in Majlis. Together with other allied parties and independent candidates, they obtained a total of 74 seats, constituting over three-fourths of the parliamentary representation. With this victory, Muizzu is much motivated to push India out. India-Maldives relations have already suffered a lot already due to Muizzu's anti-India campaign and his pro-China policies.

After showing off its 'true' love for China, Maldives faced a political turmoil as

WORLD RECAP
ANSHU JOSHI

its president Ibrahim Muizzu faced impeachment. The opposition-led parliament initiated impeachment proceedings against President Muizzu, accusing him of authoritarian behaviour and abuse of power. Muizzu was elected to power last year on the back of an aggressive 'India Out' policy that has seen the Maldives drawing closer to China. He had also ordered Indian troops stationed in Maldives. Maldives also gave a Chinese 'research' ship, the Xian Yang Hong 03, (which is flagged as a spy ship) its

permission to dock in its capital, Male. I had mentioned this apprehension in one of my previous columns that, "His pro-China attitude will not only pose challenges to the neutrality of IOR, I am also worried Maldives will prove to be next Sri Lanka or Pakistan if it falls in to the trap of 'string of pearl' strategy of China." With this whooping victory once again, Muizzu seems to be all set to further strain India-Maldives relations and become a trap of China's debt diplomacy. This would definitely

impact the stability and security of the region.

Maldives' strategic location in IOR makes it a very special nation for the entire region despite its small size. Maldives's strategic location across the strategic sea lanes that connect East Asia with West Asia increases its significance in the region. So far, India and Maldives enjoyed good bilateral relationship, and the earlier government did not fall a trap to China's 'string of pearl' strategy, using which it has already captured strategically located ports in different nations located between Chinese mainland and Port of Sudan in the Horn of Africa. China aims to control IOR region, which is obviously unacceptable to the nations like India and the US. So far,

India had its strong presence in Maldives but with Muizzu's entry as the president of Maldives, it seems that apart from the bilateral relations between India and Maldives, the regional integrity may suffer heavily.

On the other hand, the ongoing Israel-Hamas war is also proving damaging for the peace and stability of the world. Despite requests and directives of the global community, none of the two parties involved in a gory conflict is ready to cease. Amid this conflict, the recent conflict between Iran and Israel have additionally raised concerns about the possibility of the tensions spreading from West Asia to rest of the world. Recent events have emphasized Iran's position as an unpredictable player in global poli-

tics due to its backing of local proxies such as Hamas and the Houthis. While Iran has betted itself in a direct conflict with Israel, it is also inviting problems for itself by exasperating various nations including India. This week, Pakistan and Iran have jointly expressed the view over the peaceful resolution to the Kashmir according to the wishes of the region's populace, as stated in a joint announcement following Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's first official visit on 24 April. This statement has raised India's eyebrows. "We have raised the issue with Iranian officials," stated the spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, in response to queries about India's stance on the joint statement concerning the

Kashmir matter. India has consistently upheld its position that Kashmir is an internal concern and has clearly emphasized on several occasions that external parties or organizations should refrain from meddling in this issue. Despite knowing this, why Iran is intruding into an internal matter of India and troubling its bilateral relations remains a pertinent question!

Achieving the lasting peace in global politics seems to be a far-fetched dream, the leaders at least can keep working for the same. The leaders need to understand that global peace and security come before their own political objectives. Those who do not go by this very simple rule face multiple repercussions.

A GREATER LOVE – DEMYSTIFYING DETACHMENT



ERIC LE RESTE

The concept of detachment is often regarded as remaining distant from others, as being cold and uncaring, especially by those growing up in the West. In the East, detachment is a spiritual concept much more widely recognised but even so, it is not always well understood. However, when detachment is properly exercised, combined, vitally, with the power of love, then the freedom that the soul experiences is full of a wealth of feelings, attitudes, and thoughts that were simply not possible when caught up in attachments.

Detachment is about re-

gaining our freedom. It is an awareness that stops us from being torn apart when separated from things or people that we love. In the same way as a baker lines a baking tin to stop the cake falling apart when it is removed from the tin, detachment is the lining of protection that stops love being spoiled. Separation from those we love is inevitable, at some point, even if that is only in death. But there are many other reasons for separation and when we love with attachment, it only brings sorrow and suffering somewhere along the line.

We live in a world that actively promotes attachment. If we are not attached to things that the world of advertising and commerce promote, then we would not keep on buying what is on offer. We need very clear thinking and understanding to be free of the influence of this kind of manipulation. In relationships, though, the lines are much more blurred. Real love is very much misunderstood. Jealousy and anger are not



Only a pure heart can harbour love that is unsullied by attachment.

love. Control and possessiveness are not love. Manipulation and violence are not love. Happiness and sweetness, generosity

and lightness do not create any kind of sorrow – they are attributes of love. The most precious thing we can own is our happiness, and

real love for another is precious. Detachment is the protector of that pure love and keeps it free from any form of pain or sorrow.

Attachment creates expectations, desires, judgement, criticism, and possessiveness. At the very worst it evokes strong and dangerous energies of uncontrollable attraction or uncontrolled repulsion. Detachment is seeing things as they really are, without the distorted and uncomfortable conversations going on inside, about what we imagine is happening. Detachment helps us to love more and appreciate being loved with no pain, no possessiveness, and is connected to the art of letting go. Love has a purity that is worth honouring. I do not need anyone else to be happy. Happiness does not depend on who I am with or what I am doing or what is happening. Spirituality, based on the understanding that I am a soul, a beautiful unique being experiencing life on this Earth, brings great happiness. I have full rights to the beauty of life, to love freely and simply be happy the moment I awaken – I am alive on planet Earth, taking part in the biggest

movie ever made, and I am part of it. Seeing all the victory and defeat, I can embrace it all with love and detachment. I want to play a beautiful role, to be one of the 'good guys' and make things wonderful.

Inner happiness and real love are like the perfume of a flower – nothing can make the fragrance more, or less. I can love and emanate the fragrance of love without becoming lost. When there are inevitable separations, then I can give that love and not wallow in sorrow; give them good wishes for what is to come. Like a river keeps flowing towards its destiny – to reach the ocean, it does not get stuck anywhere, it keeps on flowing. Everything and everyone we meet is for a temporary period of time, we all have our own destiny to reach.

Sometimes we find that it is easier to love some rather than others. This is based on selfishness; we find it easier to love those who bring us something. So, for the ones we find not so easy to love, there are five things

we can actively do to find that pure love within us.

1. Get to know that person. Listen to their story.
 2. Seek out the real qualities within them and name them, and talk about them to others.
 3. Bring spirituality into the relationship – they are a brother or a sister, God's child. How would God see them?
 4. Find something to help them with. Bring something good to them.
 5. Gift the sense of belonging. Let them feel they belong – we are all one family. It is one world; one family, and we are all going through something.
- Love is sacred and the source of it is the Supreme Being, God. We must preserve a pure heart and not permit anyone to hurt that heart. We can combine being immensely spiritually loving, with deep compassionate detachment.
- Eric Le Reste is a journalist and was a producer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He coordinates the activities of Brahma Kumaris centres in Canada.*

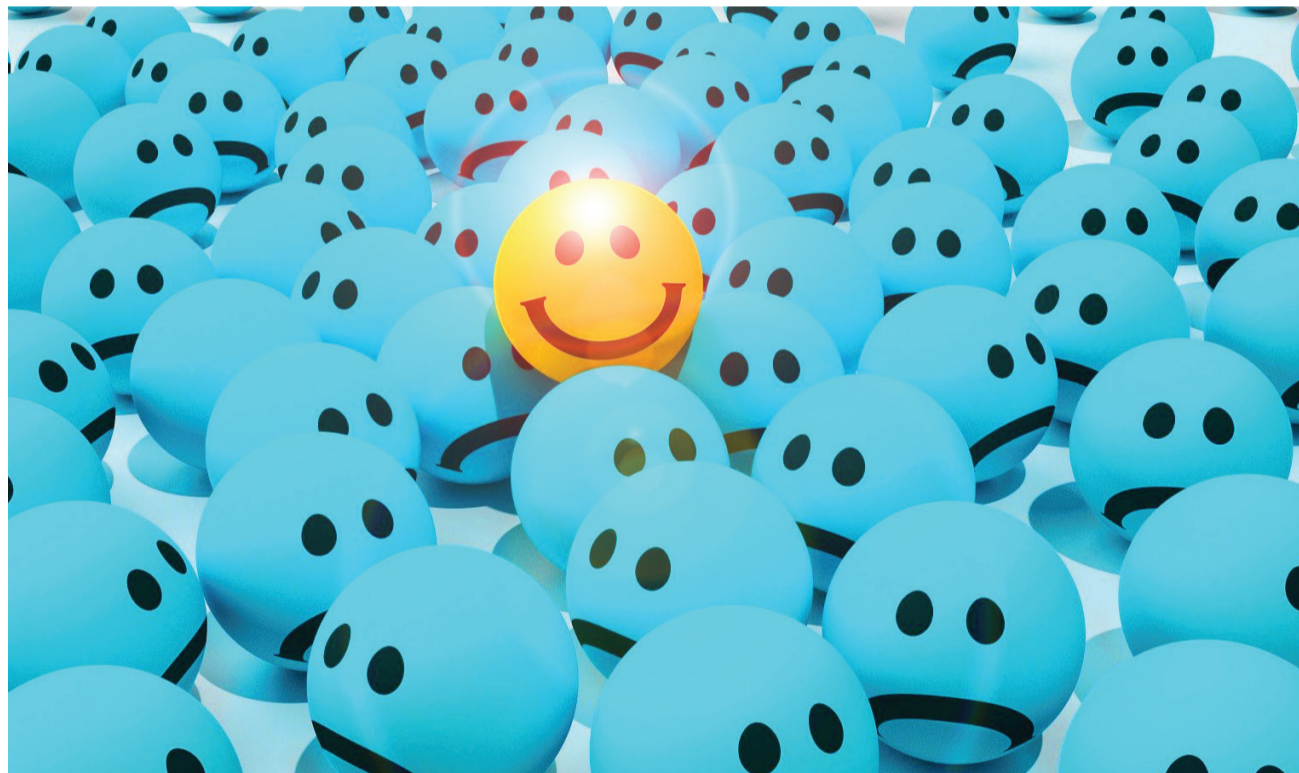
Parameters for happiness



JIM RYAN

It is curious, is it not, that the majority of people in the world seek happiness and yet they only seem to experience it in small bursts of transient moments. When those moments pass, the search is on again, and often at great expense. To be truly happy, we have to understand what happiness is really based on.

Its roots lie deep within the individual consciousness, and it is based on knowledge, or the understanding of reality. The knowledge of the true, subtle, spiritual self. The understanding of the immutable law of cause and effect. The nature and form of the Supreme Being and the



Acquiring spiritual knowledge has a domino effect: it leads to wisdom, accurate judgment, right action, and happiness.

great epochs of the cycle of time, and their exact duration. When these truths are contemplated, they lead from one state of mind to another, each bringing a new and fulfilling experience until the highest

spiritual experience of happiness is reached. Unhappiness, depression, stress, fear are all the result of a lack of the understanding of spiritual knowledge.

It is a domino effect of experience.

Spiritual knowledge leads to an inner experience of wonder, which leads to accumulated wisdom, which leads to clear discrimination, which leads to accurate judgement, which leads to correct action,

which leads to the acquisition of a virtuous nature, which leads to pure and benevolent thinking, which leads to lightness of being, which leads to happiness. Happiness must begin with

understanding what is. Understanding is the beginning but contemplating each truth requires its practical application in our lives and in our interactions with others. Holding knowledge only in the head is like understanding how to make a cake, but if the theory stays in the head, there will be no cake. It is applied truth that begins to activate the true consciousness of the self. To understand that I am a soul is only the first step in the process of simply becoming, of being. This process can be achieved in a very natural way when the consciousness is linked to that of the Supreme Being, in meditation. Delving into spiritual knowledge is moving into the sphere of true freedom, where pure activity, at the level of thoughts, words, and actions brings a lightness of being – and that is the platform for real happiness to emerge.

Jim Ryan has a background in education. He is an author and a Brahma Kumaris Rajyoga teacher, based at the Global Retreat Centre, Oxford, UK.

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

The act of de-cluttering shifts my focus from greed to need. When I learn the spiritual art of de-cluttering, I recognize the great value of accumulating subtle spiritual experiences. These fill my inner world with abundance and I lose the desire to accumulate physical possessions. Today let me experience living abundantly from the inside out.

ELEVATE YOUR POINT OF VIEW



B.K. USHA

When we climb to higher altitudes, such as when flying in an aircraft or standing on a mountaintop, everything on the plains below appears small due to the effects of perspective and distance. As we ascend, our view expands, allowing us to see a broader area of the ground below. The distance between us and objects on the ground increases, and the farther away the objects are, the smaller their apparent size becomes.

And when someone goes beyond the Earth's atmosphere, into outer space, the view can be a transformative experience. Astronauts have

said that their time in space changed their perspective on life, the universe, and humanity's place within it. Many astronauts experience what is called the "overview effect", a cognitive shift in awareness during spaceflight, often while viewing the Earth from orbit or the moon's surface. They have mentioned how fragile and delicate Earth appears from space, with its thin atmosphere and the absence of visible borders between countries. There is a newfound appreciation for the planet's interconnectedness and a sense of responsibility for its well-being. Viewing Earth from afar also evokes a sense of unity among astronauts, regardless of their nationality or background. Many of them have spoken of feeling a part of something much larger than themselves and a deep connection to all humanity.

While the above is all about physical distance and perspective, a similar shift in perception occurs with



By elevating our point of view we can see the larger picture, which helps us understand and respond to situations better.

the mind's eye. The more elevated our state of mind, the smaller matters appear to us. We see this happening in many ways. Two young siblings might be quarrelling over a toy, and for them it could be a serious issue - of rights, justice, equality, and fairness. But a parent who is watching would laugh it

off as a petty spat. The two attitudes are the result of differing perspectives. The same happens in relationships - between individuals, groups, or countries. The higher the point of view, the broader the vision, and the larger the picture we see. Matters that might be a 'big thing' to a small mind would appear

as trifles to a broad-minded person.

How do we elevate our way of thinking? There are several ways to do it.

Seeking knowledge and diverse viewpoints, and engaging in discussions with those who have different backgrounds and perspectives helps to broaden our

understanding of people and issues. Then, when we take time to reflect on our experiences, beliefs, and biases, we develop a better understanding of our thoughts and reactions.

Going a step further, when we put ourselves in others' shoes and try to appreciate their perspectives, feelings,

and motivations, we develop deeper connections with them and are able to see the world from different points of view.

Critical thinking also helps. Questioning assumptions, analysing information critically, and considering multiple angles before forming opinions or making decisions helps avoid narrow-mindedness and have a more flexible approach to complex issues. Being open to constructive criticism and feedback is also important, as it may reveal blind spots or areas where our perspective might be limited.

But, as with astronauts who go beyond the Earth's atmosphere, if we step into the realm of spirituality, we too can experience an overview effect of sorts. When we consider the fact that all people in the world are essentially spiritual entities or souls, who are immortal, sentient beings of light, each playing their unique role in life, then the way we see ourselves and the world changes.

The fact that as souls we are all children of one Supreme Soul, and therefore part of one family, fosters a sense of spiritual kinship with the rest of humanity. Factors such as religion, nationality, race, and culture, which tend to create barriers between individuals and communities, cease to matter much. After all, like me the others too are souls, my brothers. The change in our point of view triggers other changes: fear, suspicion, and hostility give way to understanding and acceptance. Competition and deceit are replaced by cooperation. Strife and sorrow end, and there is friendship and peace.

All it takes is for us to elevate our perspective. The higher we go, the more we see and understand, and when we help others rise to the same level, we all get the picture, and there is no reason for conflict anymore.

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