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Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (sco) Defence Ministers Meeting at Delhi

*‘Unanimous that the terrorism, in whatever form,
shall be condemned and controlled.’*



**Suresh Srivastava, IFUNA Secretary General With Kofi Annan,
Then Secretary General Of United Nations**

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I, SURESH KUMAR SRIVASTAVA hereby declare that the particulars given
above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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THE Defence Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in their recent meet on 28th April at Delhi supported and agreed "to root out terrorism collectively and fix accountability". One hopes the participating Defence Ministers of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan including Pakistan who attended virtually will adhere to this resolution in "true letter and spirit". Chairing the meet India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had rightly observed that "Peace and prosperity cannot co-exist with this menace. If a nation shelters terrorists, it not only poses a threat to others, but for itself too. Radicalization of youth is a cause of concern not only from the point of view of security, but it is also a major obstacle in the path of socio-economic progress of society." As a participant to this meeting and to maintain its credibility one expects that Pakistan will take strong measures and actions to see that terrorists are eliminated in their country and no more terrorism is promoted or sponsored from their land or territory.

After Rajnath Singh bilateral talk with Chinese Defence Minister Li Shang Fu in the side line of SCO meet, it is said, China's Defence Minister told Rajnath Singh that India-China border situation 'generally stable': China has said that the two countries share far more common interests than differences and the two sides should take a long-term view, place the border issue in an appropriate position in bilateral relations, and promote the transition of the border situation to normalized management. China stated "Currently, the situation on the China-India border is generally stable and the two sides have maintained communication through military and diplomatic channels. The two sides should take a long-term view, place the border issue in an appropriate position in bilateral relations, and promote the transition of the border situation to normalized management. It is hoped that the two sides will work together to continuously enhance mutual trust between the two militaries and make proper contributions to the development of bilateral relations, as major neighboring countries and important developing countries, China and India share far more common interests than differences."

China must realise that disputes can be resolved only on table to restore peace and not by military confrontation.

There is no doubt that peace on the border is in the mutual interest of both the countries for their growth and prosperity.

— **Pran Mohan Parvatiyar**
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Defence minister Rajnath Singh holds a bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Li Shangfu on the sidelines of the SCO Defence Ministers' meeting in New Delhi

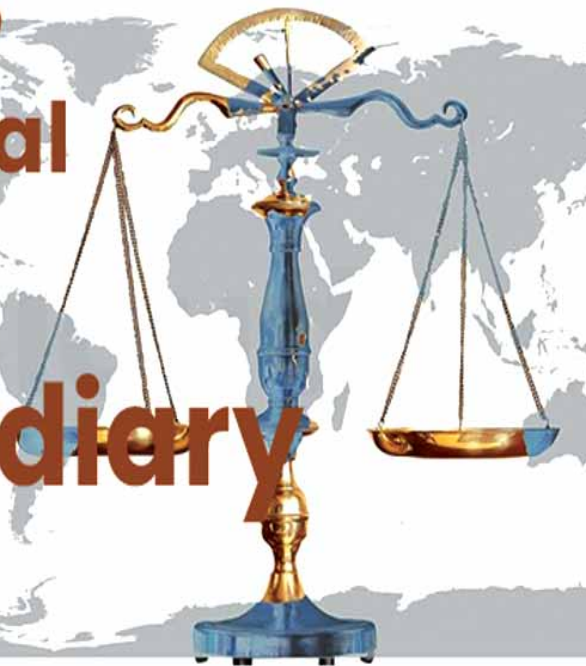
India elected to UN Statistical Commission for 4-year term

United Nations: India secured an overwhelming 46 out of 53 votes in a secret ballot in a highly competitive election for membership to the Statistical Commission

India elected to
UN Statistical
Commission

other key

UN subsidiary
bodies



INDIA WAS ELECTED BY THE UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC) AS A MEMBER OF THE UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION, THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS AND THE PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD OF THE JOINT UN PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), AN IMPORTANT SUBSIDIARY BODY OF THE UN ORGAN FOCUSED ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES.

INDIA was overwhelmingly elected to the UN Statistical Commission, returning to the world organization's highest statistical body after a gap of two decades in a highly competitive election.

In the election, South Korea won over China for the other seat in the Asia Pacific States category through a draw of lots after inconclusive rounds of secret-ballot voting.

India was elected by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as a member of the UN Statistical Commission, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), an

important subsidiary body of the UN organ focussed on economic, social and environmental issues.

In a highly competitive election for membership to the Statistical Commission, India secured an overwhelming 46 out of 53 votes in a secret ballot. India, along with South Korea, UAE and China were in the fray for two seats from the Asia Pacific States category.

In the first round of voting, South Korea got 23 votes while China got 19 and the United Arab Emirates 15. In the second round, China and South Korea each got 25 votes. As per the Council's rules of procedure,



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar hails significant feat

INDIA WAS ELECTED BY ACCLAMATION TO THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS ALONG WITH ARGENTINA, BURUNDI, CHILE, CHINA, THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, GUATEMALA, INDONESIA, JAPAN, KENYA, MEXICO, MOROCCO, NIGERIA, PERU, QATAR, SINGAPORE, SOUTH AFRICA, THAILAND, THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, URUGUAY AND ZIMBABWE FOR A FOUR-YEAR TERM OF OFFICE, BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2024.

South Korea was elected for the second seat through the drawing of lots following two inconclusive rounds of secret-ballot voting.

Argentina, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Ukraine, the United Republic of Tanzania and the US were elected by acclamation to the Statistical Commission for a four-year term of office beginning January 1, 2024.

India was a member of the Statistical Commission last in 2004 and the country is returning to the UN agency after a gap of two decades.

"The experience of India in the field of official statistics especially with regard to its diversity and demography is immense and will be a valuable addition to the functioning of the Statistical Commission," a press release issued by the Permanent Mission of India to UN here said.

India was elected by acclamation to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs along with Argentina, Burundi, Chile, China, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Peru, Qatar, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Zimbabwe for a four-year



India has been elected to the United Nations Statistical Commission for four years.

term of office, beginning January 1, 2024.

Austria, Armenia, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States were elected for the same term of office by secret ballot.

India was also elected by acclamation to the Committee for Programme and Coordination along with Armenia, Brazil, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Germany, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States and Uruguay for a three-year term of office beginning January 1, 2024.

ECOSOC elected India and Cambodia for a term



United Nations Statistical Commission

of office beginning on April 5, 2023, and expiring on December 31, 2025, to fill outstanding vacancies from the Asia-Pacific States in the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

The Council was elected by acclamation Australia, Burundi, Finland and Iran for a three-year term of office, beginning January 2024.

"The overwhelming support received by India in today's elections reflects the trust reposed by the international community in India's expertise in these bodies. Guided by the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' or 'The World is One Family', India will strive to make its due contributions in these and other organs, in the spirit of advancing multilateral solutions to global challenges," the press release issued by the Permanent Mission of India said.

The UN Statistical Commission, established in 1947, is the highest body of the global statistical system bringing together the Chief Statisticians from member states from around the world.

It is the highest decision-making body for

international statistical activities, responsible for setting statistical standards and the development of concepts and methods, including their implementation at the national and international levels.

The Commission consists of 24 member countries of the United Nations elected by the United Nations Economic and Social Council on the basis of equitable geographical distribution.

Five members are from African States, four from Asia-Pacific States, four from Eastern European States, four from Latin American and Caribbean States and seven members from Western European and other States.

The current members from the Asia-Pacific States are Japan (2024), Samoa (2024) as well as Kuwait and South Korea, whose terms are ending this year.

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs supervises the application of international drug control treaties, while the Programme Coordinating Board of UNAIDS supports and provides strategic direction for an international response to HIV/AIDS.

FIVE MEMBERS ARE FROM AFRICAN STATES, FOUR FROM ASIA-PACIFIC STATES, FOUR FROM EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES, FOUR FROM LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STATES AND SEVEN MEMBERS FROM WESTERN EUROPEAN AND OTHER STATES.

THE CURRENT MEMBERS FROM THE ASIA-PACIFIC STATES ARE JAPAN (2024), SAMOA (2024) AS WELL AS KUWAIT AND SOUTH KOREA, WHOSE TERMS ARE ENDING THIS YEAR.

IFUNA OBSERVED **INTERNATIONAL** **WOMEN'S DAY IN ASSAM**



MRS. KAKOLI BORDOLOI, a reputed social activist in Assam, addressing the audience on the occasion of International Women's Day observed by IFUNA at Nowgong College, Nagaon, Assam

DR. SARAT BORKOTOKY, PRINCIPAL OF NOWGONG COLLEGE, NAGAON, IN HIS SPEECH HAS LAID EMPHASIS ON DUE RESPECT & RIGHTS TO BE GIVEN TO THE WOMEN FOR THEIR UPLIFTMENT AND SHOULD TAKE RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS DIGITALIZED WORLD FOR THE BETTER SERVICES IN THE SOCIETY.

THE INDIAN Federation of UN Associations (IFUNA), New Delhi observed the International Women' day at Nowgong College, Nagaon in Assam on 10th March 2023 in association with Nowgong College, Nagaon, Assam.

Mrs. Kakoli Bordoloi, a reputed social worker in Assam, was the chief Guest and also a resource person on the occasion. Mrs. Bordoloi, in her keynote Speech, has addressed the audience on the theme for the year 2023," Digit ALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality". In her

Speech, She has stressed on the equal rights, freedom and respect for the girls and Women. She appealed to the women and girls to come forward and take responsibilities in the society for the better welfare and well- being of the people.

Dr. Sarat Borkotoky, Principal of Nowgong College, Nagaon, in his speech has laid emphasis on due respect & rights to be given to the women for their upliftment and should take responsibilities in this digitalized world for the better services in the society.



Dr. Sarat Borkatoky, Principal of Nowgong College (Autonomous), Dr. Aswini Sarma, Secretary General, UNA- Assam, Mrs. Kakoli Bordoloi, Resource Person, Mrs. Marami Goswami, Academic Officer, UNA-Assam, Faculties and Students of Nowgong College on International Women's Day observed by IFUNA at Nowgong College, Assam held on 10th March, 2023

Dr. Aswini Sarma, Secretary General of UNA-Assam & Secretary of IFUNA, briefed on the significance of observing the International Women's day as declared by UN General Assembly the every year.

Earlier, the message of UN secretary General Mr. Antonnio Guettarrus on the occasion of International Women's day was read out by Mrs. Marami Goswami-Academic Secretary of UNA-Assam.

The meeting was moderated by Dr. Bhuban Chetia, a senior faculty of Nowgong College and a member of UNA-Assam.

The Vote of Thanks was offered by Mrs.Himangshi Kashyap, a faculty of Nowgong College and also a member of UNA-Assam.

The meeting was well-attended by distinguished invitees, faculties and students of the esteemed college, the Nowgong College (an Autonomous College)



Dr. Aswini Sarma, Secretary General, UNA Assam and Secretary, IFUNA, addressing the audience on the occasion of International Women's Day observed at Nowgong College, Nagaon, Assam on 10th March, 2023

IFUNA OBSERVED LAWYERS DAY WITH UFUNA



Indian Federation Of United Nations Associations (IFUNA) along With Utkal Federation Of United Nations Association (UFUNA) jointly celebrated the lawyer's day in Odisha on the occasion of birth anniversary of Barrister Madhusudan Das in the UFUNA office. Former CBI judge Shri Bhikari Charan Rout as chief guest told that Madhu Babu was first person who completed his legal education in England. Chief speaker Dr. Pramod Naik said Madhu Babu was a social worker due to whom Odisha

became first linguistic state in India on April 1, 1936. Most of the speakers spoke about many fold talents and qualities of Madhu Babu. UFUNA Secretary Bahadur Patsani welcomed the guests. Bichitranda Mohanty proposed a vote of thanks. UFUNA President and Secretary IFUNA advocate Manoranjan Pattnaik presided over the meeting. Er.D .D.Panda, environmentalist Upendra Rout, Chandramani Naik, advocate Barsha Pattanik. Deba Prasad Mishra, Er. Abinas Das also participated in the meeting.

Bhutan king in delhi

Focus on Bilateral ties

India and Bhutan recognised that their long-standing development partnership is reflective of strong ties of cooperation and friendship based on trust and mutual understanding

BHUTAN King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck landed in India on Monday 3rd April for two-day visit amid some concerns in New Delhi over China's attempts to expand influence over Thimphu.

The Bhutanese King was received at the Delhi airport by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, in a special gesture reflecting the importance New Delhi has attached to the visit. In the evening, Jaishankar called on the visiting dignitary and said the King's vision for Bhutan's future and for strengthening the unique partnership with India is deeply appreciated.

Bhutan is a strategically important country for India and the defence and security ties between the two sides have witnessed significant expansion in the last few years.

The strategic ties witnessed an upward trajectory in the last few years in the backdrop of a 73-day face-off between Indian and Chinese troops in Doklam tri-junction in 2017.

The Doklam plateau is considered an important area for India's strategic interest. The standoff at Doklam tri-junction in 2017 began after China tried to extend a road in an area that Bhutan claimed belonged to it.

India had strongly opposed the construction as it would have impacted its overall security interests. The India-China face-off was resolved following several rounds of talks.

In October 2021, Bhutan and China signed an agreement on a "three-step roadmap" to expedite negotiations to resolve their festering boundary dispute.

Bhutan shares an over 400-km-long border with China and the two countries have held over 24 rounds of boundary talks in a bid to resolve the dispute.

In a recent interview, the Bhutanese prime minister had said that China has an equal say in resolving the border dispute in Doklam. India has consistently been Bhutan's top trading partner, and remains the leading source of investments in Bhutan.

According to Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra India and Bhutan closely coordinate on shared national and security interests and that security concerns of both sides are intertwined and indivisible.

Against the backdrop of renewed focus on the Doklam tri-junction, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck on 4th April held



talks focusing on a five-point broad roadmap to expand the "time-tested" relations besides delving into shared national security interests.

At a media briefing after the talks, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said India and Bhutan closely coordinate on shared national and security interests and that security concerns of both sides are intertwined and indivisible.

The talks between Modi and the visiting King took place days after Bhutan's Prime Minister Lotay Tshering said that China has an equal say in resolving the border dispute relating to the strategically-located Doklam tri-junction.

When asked whether the Doklam issue figured in the talks, Kwatra said India-Bhutan ties are based on mutual respect, trust, close understanding and sensitivity to each other's concerns, adding Modi and the King covered the entire gamut of bilateral cooperation including issues of "respective national interests".

"Now besides this exemplary and unique relationship that India and Bhutan have, we also have a time-tested framework of security cooperation," he said.

"And as part of that, both countries maintain a longstanding tradition of very close consultations on matters relating to their mutual interest and, of course, security also. Now in this context the intertwined and indivisible nature of our security concerns is self-evident," he said.

WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE DOKLAM ISSUE FIGURED IN THE TALKS, KWATRA SAID INDIA-BHUTAN TIES ARE BASED ON MUTUAL RESPECT, TRUST, CLOSE UNDERSTANDING AND SENSITIVITY TO EACH OTHER'S CONCERNS, ADDING MODI AND THE KING COVERED THE ENTIRE GAMUT OF BILATERAL COOPERATION INCLUDING ISSUES OF "RESPECTIVE NATIONAL INTERESTS".

IS BHUTAN CHANGING STANCE ON DOKLAM DISPUTE?

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck was in New Delhi on 3rd and 4th April 2023. This week. Talks between PM Modi and President Draupadi Murmu underscored strong traditional bonds between India and Bhutan. Both sides agreed to carry forward deep-rooted ties. But there can be no missing a distinct worrying undercurrent - the Bhutan PM recently said China could be a party to the Doklam dispute. Though he clarified later that there was no change in Bhutan's stand.

It is unclear if Bhutan is willing to hand over territory it has lost on its Western frontier in an effort to retain the areas to the North. Any move to legitimise Chinese control of Bhutanese territory to the West would be directly against India's security interests.

In January this year, Chinese and Bhutanese experts met in Kunming and agreed to work towards reaching an agreement on their boundary talks. Both sides have held more than 20 rounds of talks so far and are reportedly working to arrive at a 'positive consensus'. "We are not

experiencing major border problems with China, but some territories have not yet been demarcated," said Prime Minister Tshering, downplaying the extent of China's intrusions. "After one or two more meetings, we will probably be able to draw a dividing line."

New Delhi will be closely watching where that line is placed on a map.

Bhutan also said it was ready to "draw out a line demarcating its boundary" with China with regards to the border disputes other than Doklam. Asked if China was intruding into his territory, Bhutanese Prime Minister Lotay Tshering, in an interview with Belgian Daily 'La Libre', said, "Doklam is a tri-junction between India, China and Bhutan. It is not up to Bhutan alone to solve the problem. We are three equal countries. There is no big or small country." He said Bhutan was ready to discuss the issue as soon as the two other parties agreed. "India and China have problems all along their border. We are waiting to see how they resolve their differences," he said.

The statement contradicts Bhutan's stance



elucidated in 2019 when Tshering said the "existing tri-junction point should not be disturbed unilaterally". About the Bhutan-China talks (on since 1984) on demarcating the border, the PM said, "We do not encounter major border problems with China, but certain territories are not yet demarcated. We still have to discuss it and draw a line. We have come to understand each other. Last month, a Bhutanese delegation visited China and we are now awaiting the arrival of a Chinese tech-

"AS REGARDS THE RECENT STATEMENTS AND THE RELATED COMMENTARY TO THEM IS CONCERNED, I WOULD SAY THAT ONE - INDIA AND BHUTAN REMAIN IN CLOSE TOUCH RELATING TO OUR SHARED INTERESTS INCLUDING OUR SECURITY INTERESTS," HE SAID. BOUNDARY POINTS," HE ADDED.

Kwatra said India very closely follows all developments having a bearing on its national interest and it takes all necessary measures to safeguard them as necessary.

"As regards the recent statements and the related commentary to them is concerned, I would say that one - India and Bhutan remain in close touch relating to our shared interests including our security interests," he said.

"I would only reiterate our earlier statements on this issue which very explicitly and very clearly bring out our position on the determination of the tri-junction boundary points," he added.

In 2017, India said that the boundary issues at tri-junction points such as Doklam must be resolved with the involvement of all three countries.

The Doklam plateau is considered an important area for India's strategic interest.

The Indian and Chinese armies were locked in a 73-day stand-off at the Doklam tri-junction in 2017 after China tried to extend a road in an area that Bhutan claimed belonged to it.

In October 2021, Bhutan and China signed an agreement on a "three-step roadmap" to expedite negotiations to resolve their festering boundary dispute.

Bhutan shares an over 400-km-long border with China.

"If you look at the framework of your question, look at context of the framework, look at the centre of that context and perspective, then naturally, India's national interests, Bhutan's national interests, and the interest of India-Bhutan relationship comes up at the centre of all that," Kwatra said.

He was asked about the Bhutanese PM's comments and whether the Doklam issue was discussed at the talks between Modi and the Bhutan King.

"Like I said at the beginning, there are some core fundamentals of India-Bhutan relationship," Kwatra said.

"These fundamentals are shared values, trust, as I said, mutual respect and a close understanding and sensitivity to each other's interests and concerns," he said.

In a tweet, Modi said:-

"Pleased to receive His Majesty the King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. We had a warm and productive meeting. Deeply value our close friendship and the vision of successive Druk Gyalpos in guiding India-Bhutan relations to new heights."

Kwatra said the proposed rail link project between Kokrajhar (Assam) and Gelephu (Bhutan) will be expedited and that it would be the first ever rail link between the two countries.

The foreign secretary said there were five broad points

nical team in Bhutan."

After a meeting or two, he said, the two sides would probably be able to draw a line. He went on to dismiss media reports about Chinese installations in Bhutan. "We don't make a deal of it because it's not in Bhutan. This is an international border and we know exactly what belongs to us," he said. Besides Doklam, Bhutan and China have disputes in Jakarlung and Pasamlung Valleys in the northern boundary of Bhutan. Doklam (western front) is around 270 square km while the northern boundary dispute areas measure nearly 500 square km.

For India, it remains to be seen if Bhutan cedes Doklam and retains the areas to its north. This would mean China getting ensconced on the Doklam plateau, which will allow it a clear view of the sensitive Siliguri corridor, the narrow tract of land connecting mainland India with the north-eastern states. For India, it means China going back on a commitment made in 2012 to maintain status quo at border tri-junctions such as Doklam. As per international maps, the tri-junction of Doklam at Batang La was never demarcated. The 1890 Sikkim-Tibet boundary treaty says Mount Gipmochi (14,300 feet high) shall be the point where Tibet and Sikkim territories converge. In 1904, the British captured Tibet and in a 1906 treaty, they handed over the Chumbi valley to Tibet. The Chumbi valley ends in the north of Doklam plateau at Batang La.

that were identified to expand the ties.

The first point was on economic and development partnership which included cooperation for Bhutan's 13th Five Year Plan that begins next year.

Kwatra said India's support would include relevant financial assistance for the reform process in Bhutan and for projects based on development partnership.

The second bucket of issues was relating to trade, connectivity and investment cooperation, which in turn included discussions on infrastructure connectivity, rail links, air connectivity and inland waterways among others.

The third one related to elements pertaining to long term and sustainable trade facilitation measures that India and Bhutan could take, which would link to the economic growth and prosperity of both economies.

While the fourth point was related to new paradigms of cooperation in areas of energy which also provides for cooperation in areas of non-hydro-renewable space.

The last one related to cooperation in new sectors, which included space and startups.

Highlighting various aspects of the bilateral ties, Kwatra said both sides are examining and considering setting up of the first Integrated Check Post (ICP) along India-Bhutan border, which would be somewhere near Jaigaon.



President Droupadi Murmu Welcomes Bhutan King Jigme Wagchuck, Says India Will Remain A Reliable Partner Of Bhutan

He said it was agreed that India would step up its support to Bhutan's upcoming 13th Five Year Plan.

"The specifics of the support, its distribution into different projects, that is something which is to be worked out between the two systems going forward," he said.

"At Bhutan's request, India would work to extend an additional standby credit facility. This would be over and above the two existing standby credit facilities that are operating between the two countries," he said.

Kwatra said India would work to shape long term sustainable arrangements for export of agricultural commodities from Bhutan and develop bilateral arrangements for supply of critical commodities to that country which would include petroleum, fertilizers, and coal.

"In the field of hydro-power specifically, which has been the cornerstone of our economic relationship, we have agreed to an upward revision of the tariff of the Chhukha hydro-electric project," he said.

"Besides the existing range of hydropower projects and also exploring the non-hydro-renewable space, we would also try and expedite the finalization of modalities for new hydroelectric projects, hydropower projects, including the Sankosh hydroelectric project," he added.

Kwatra said India and Bhutan share an "exemplary" relationship, which is characterised by trust, goodwill, mutual understanding.

The foreign secretary said the King briefed the prime minister on his significant transformation and reform initiative that Bhutan is "The prime minister, on his part, reiterated India's continued and full support to the socio-economic development in Bhutan based, of course, on the priorities of the royal government and in keeping with the transformation initiatives and reform process as per the vision of His Majesty," he said.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THE KING BRIEFED THE PRIME MINISTER ON HIS SIGNIFICANT TRANSFORMATION AND REFORM INITIATIVE THAT BHUTAN IS "THE PRIME MINISTER, ON HIS PART, REITERATED INDIA'S CONTINUED AND FULL SUPPORT TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BHUTAN BASED, OF COURSE, ON THE PRIORITIES OF THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT AND IN KEEPING WITH THE TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES AND REFORM PROCESS AS PER THE VISION OF HIS MAJESTY," HE SAID.

COMMENTS ABROAD

'Unbelievable, visionary' U.S. Commerce Secretary Raimondo recounts her meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi

U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, who was in India recently, recounted her recent interactions with PM Modi, during an event hosted by the Indian Embassy in Washington on April 15 Saturday.



US commerce secretary Gina Raimondo had a fruitful meeting with P.M. Modi in Delhi in March 23

U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo has hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi as an "unbelievable, visionary" and the most popular world leader with the commitment and desire to move India forward as a global power.

Ms. Raimondo who was in India last month, recounted her recent interactions with Prime Minister Modi, during an event hosted by the Indian Embassy here on Saturday.

"I had an incredible opportunity to spend more than an hour and a half with Prime Minister Modi. He is the most popular world leader for a reason. He is unbelievable, visionary and his level of commitment to the people of India is just indescribable and deep and passionate and real and authentic. And his desire to lift people out of poverty and move India forward as a global power is real, and it is

happening," Ms. Raimondo said amid thunderous applause from the audience.

"The best part of the meeting for me was this. Anyone who knows Prime Minister Modi, all of you knows, he is a tech guy and he is deep into the details. So, I found myself at his home at 7:30 p.m. on a Friday night, talking about the details of radio access networks and artificial intelligence. It was just amazing," she said.

Ms. Raimondo was in India last month for the India-U.S. Commercial Dialogue and India-U.S. CEO Forum meeting.

She led a high-powered business delegation to India.

"In the years to come, there will be two ecosystems of technology. One consistent with our democratic values and another not. I said to him, the United States and India need to lead the world together in this technology ecosystem. Without missing a beat, after he travelled all week, he said to me, well, Secretary AI doesn't stand for artificial intelligence. He said, "AI is America-India technology," she said.

Ms. Raimondo, 51, said that going forward, India and the U.S. would lead the artificial intelligence (AI) revolution.

"We're entering into a new era of even deeper collaboration and partnership between the United States and India. I use that word partnership deliberately, young partnership equal partners working together," she said.

Ms. Raimondo acknowledged that the best of India was at display during her visit, in terms of culture, tradition and celebrations.

"When I was in India, I met with women, and by the way, amazing female weavers and

More amazing than other leaders': PM Modi popular on Chinese social media, says Beijing-based journalist

Chinese citizens believe India led by Prime Minister Modi can maintain a balance among major countries in the world, according to a Beijing-based journalist

Prime Minister Modi is fondly known as 'Modi Laoxian' among Chinese netizens, according to a Beijing-based journalist. In an article titled 'How Is India Viewed in China' published in The Diplomat, Mu Chunshan says he has spotted Chinese social media users describe the Indian PM as 'Modi Laoxian'.

Chunshan wrote, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has an unusual nickname on the Chinese internet: Modi Laoxian. Laoxian refers to an elderly immortal with some weird abilities. The nickname implies that Chinese netizens think Modi is different - even more amazing - than other leaders."

"They point to both his dress and physical appearance, seen as Laoxian-like, and some of his policies, which are different from India's previous ones," Chunshan wrote.

He described the meaning of the word 'Laoxian' as something that captures "the complex sentiment of Chinese people toward Modi, combining curiosity, aston-

ishment, and perhaps a dash of cynicism".

The journalist also said that it was rare for Chinese social media users to give a nickname to a foreign leader. The fact that Modi had a nickname meant he had made an impression on Chinese public opinion, according to Chunshan.

PM Modi had an account on the Chinese social media platform Sina Weibo till July 2020 with over 2.40 lakh followers. However, he quit the platform in July 2020 when the Indian government banned Chinese apps amid dwindling ties.

Chunshan, in the article, mentions that Chinese people have no malice towards India, but the border dispute is an 'exception'. India-China relations hit rock bottom following the Galwan Valley clash in 2020, which claimed the lives of 20 Indian Army personnel. Since then, Indian and Chinese armies have held a series of high-level commanders' talks to resolve the standoff.

Chunshan says that Chinese people

have a realistic view and believe China's attempts to use Pakistan against India are "unrealistic". Referring to the instability in Pakistan and the rise of India on the global stage, Chunshan points out that Chinese citizens are aware of the widening gap between the two nations (India and Pakistan).

Chunshan further underscores that China and India have more room for cooperation since China's trade with India stands at \$115 billion a year, way more than its trade with Pakistan. China's trade with Pakistan is pegged at around \$30 billion a year. The journalist also stated that Chinese people were anxious about India's growing popularity in the West and its handling of the Ukraine crisis.

The journalist wrote, "In the eyes of these netizens, if India one day becomes the world's second-largest economy and its military strength continues to develop, then the United States will be sure to suppress India- as it is now doing to China."

Courtesy: Mehak Agarwal

artisans. I met with some of your unicorn entrepreneurs. I met with investors. I met with the biggest CEOs. India has arrived, India has more than arrived. This is a fact. And now what we need to do is deepen the relationship between the United States and India," she said.

"Because what we share, as Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, democracy is messy. Our democracy is diverse, messy, and imperfect, as is yours but we value diversity, we value education, we value human rights, we value equality," she added.

Meanwhile, pictures and video clips of Ms. Raimondo playing Holi at Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's residence have gone viral on social media, as it reflects the strong relationship between the U.S. and India.



L to R :Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, Eam Jaishankar, Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and us Commerce Secretary Raimondo attends holi 2023 celebrations: at Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's official residence in delhi during Raimondo visit to India.



Foreign ministers of Quad countries meet in **Delhi on 3rd March 2023**

**Quad Foreign Ministers announce setting up of
Quad working group on counter-terrorism**

All the four nations

**"United States, Japan, Australia and India supported
and called for the reform of the UN"**



**QUAD GROUPING OF
COUNTRIES COMPRISING
OF US, JAPAN, AUS-
TRALIA AND INDIA
ANNOUNCED THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A
WORKING GROUP ON
COUNTER-TERRORISM IN
SHARPENING OF THE
GROUP'S FOCUS TO
COMBAT TERROR.**

INDIA'S External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who chaired the QUAD foreign ministers' meeting in New Delhi, attended by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, his Japanese counterpart Yoshimasa Hayashi and Australia's Penny Wong, said that the Quad will be doing a Maritime Security Working Group shortly in Washington. One of the outcomes we agreed on is that listing of terrorists shouldn't be politicized. "The foreign ministers agreed on a counter-terrorism working group and that listing of terrorists shouldn't be politicized. All four nations supported the reform of the UN" he added.

Quad announces establishment of Working Group on Counter-Terrorism

Quad grouping of countries comprising of US, Japan,

Australia and India announced the establishment of a Working Group on Counter-Terrorism in sharpening of the group's focus to combat terror.

A joint statement of the Quad Leaders issued in New Delhi denounced the use of terrorist proxies and committed to promote accountability for terrorist attacks including the 26/11 attack in Mumbai, "which claimed lives of citizens from all Quad countries". Heavily-armed terrorists from Pakistan struck in Mumbai on November 26, 2008 in which at least 174 people, including 26 foreign nationals, were killed and over 300 people injured.

Quad powers concerned over militarization of waters around China



The model for Asia's Quad? The Beatles,

As Asia's "Quad" powers search for ways to define the group, Japan's foreign minister has offered a model -- **THE BEATLES**

NEW DELHI: Japanese foreign minister Yoshimasa Hayashi on Friday 3rd March sought to draw an analogy between legendary English rock band The Beatles with the Quad referring to the grouping of Japan, Australia, the US and India as more of a "soft Beatles" where "every member may release a solo album of their own"!

Hayashi who was not present at yesterday's G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting arrived in the national capital Delhi early this morning to attend the meeting of foreign ministers from the Quad nations.

"We don't try to exclude anybody (including China). As long as China abides by international norms and laws then there are no conflicting issues between China and the Quad," the Japanese FM asserted.

China views the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or the Quad with concern and has referred to the grouping as the "Indo-Pacific NATO" and anti-China.

The joint statement issued after the Quad ministerial meeting here today stated that the grouping strongly oppose any "unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo or increase



tensions" in the South and East China Seas.

"We recognize that peace and security in the maritime domain underpins the development and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific, and reiterate the importance of respect for sovereignty, consistent with international law. We reiterate the importance of adherence to international law, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to meet challenges to the maritime rules-based order, including in the South and East China Seas," the statement said.

"We express serious concern at the militarization of disputed features, the

dangerous use of coast guard vessels and maritime militia, and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities," it said.

The Quad joint statement agreed to strengthen co-operation on maritime surveillance to counter China's influence across the Indo-Pacific.

Meanwhile, Blinken speaking at the same panel as the Japanese foreign minister said that Quad is not a military grouping but is now engaged in working together to help countries to deal with humanitarian situations in natural disasters.

"We are working on things that are really critical," Blinken said at a panel discussion of the Quad Foreign Ministers themed "The Quad Squad: Power and Purpose of the Polygon" in the national capital.

The Quad Foreign Ministers meet on the sidelines of the eighth edition of the Raisina Dialogue the flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-strategy organised by the Ministry of External Affairs with the Observer Research Foundation.

India, the US, Japan and Australia are members of the Quad grouping.

The United States, Japan, India and Australia expressed concern over the militarization of waters around China on the heels of a flare-up in tensions between Washington and Beijing.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the foreign ministers of the other three nations met in New Delhi under the auspices of their Quad grouping.

The latest meeting, on the sidelines of a Group of 20 gathering in the Indian capital, comes weeks after Blinken scrapped a trip to Beijing following an alleged Chinese spy balloon's flight over the United States.

In a joint statement issued by host India, the Quad called for "the importance of adherence to international law" in the East and South China Seas "to meet challenges

to the maritime rules-based order".

"We strongly oppose any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo or increase tensions in the area," it said.

"We express serious concern at the militarization of disputed features, the dangerous use of coast guard vessels and maritime militia and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities," it added.

China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, through which trillions of dollars in trade passes annually.

Quad FMs, wary of China's might, push Indo-Pacific option

US SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN AND THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE OTHER THREE NATIONS MET IN NEW DELHI UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THEIR QUAD GROUPING.

“Our meeting today reaffirms the Quad’s steadfast commitment to supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is inclusive and resilient,” a joint statement said.

The following is the joint statement released by the Secretary of State of the United States and the Foreign Ministers of the Governments of Australia, India, and Japan on the occasion of the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

WE, The Foreign Ministers of Australia, India and Japan and the Secretary of State of the United States of America met in New Delhi, India on March 3, 2023, for the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Our meeting today reaffirms the Quad's steadfast commitment to supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is inclusive and resilient. We strongly support the principles of freedom, rule of law, sovereignty and territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes without resorting to threat or use of force and freedom of navigation and overflight, and oppose any unilateral attempt to change the status quo, all of which are essential to the peace, stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

We reiterate our conviction that the Quad, acting as a force for regional and global good, will be guided by the priorities of the Indo-Pacific region through its positive and constructive agenda. Through the Quad, we seek to support the region through practical cooperation on contemporary challenges such as health security, climate change and the clean energy transition, critical and emerging technologies, infrastructure and connectivity, addressing the debt crisis through sustainable, transparent and fair lending and financing practices, space cooperation, cyber-security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime security and counterterrorism.

Reaffirming our consistent and unwavering support for ASEAN centrality and unity, and the ASEAN-led architecture, including the East Asia Summit and ASEAN Regional Forum, we remain committed to supporting implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and will be guided in our work by ASEAN's principles and priorities.



L to r Australia's Penny Wong, S Jaishankar, US Antony Blinken and Japan Yoshimasa Hayashi At QUAD meeting in Delhi

We welcome Indonesia's 2023 ASEAN Chairmanship and will support its Chair theme "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth," as we identify tangible areas for the Quad to support the work of ASEAN. In addition, we are committed to further strengthening our respective relationships with ASEAN, thus creating a platform for greater Quad collaboration in support of the AOIP.

We are committed to supporting Pacific Island countries in line with the objectives of the Pacific Islands Forum's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, guided by Pacific priorities of climate change, resilient infrastructure, and maritime security. We support regional institutions in the Pacific and are also further strengthening our cooperation with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), to address the region's most pressing and important challenges. We welcome India's leadership in finalizing the IORA Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

We are pleased to note the progress made under the Quad Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Partnership (HADR) for the Indo-Pacific, since our last meeting in September 2022, when we signed onto the Guidelines for the Partnership. We welcome the outcomes of the first HADR tabletop exer-

cise and biannual meeting held in India in December 2022. We look forward to the finalization of the Partnership's Standard Operating Procedures which would enable an efficacious and coordinated response mechanism.

We concur that the rules-based international order is anchored in international law, including the UN Charter, and the principles of sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of all states. We are committed to cooperate to address attempts to unilaterally subvert the UN and international system, in consultation with our partners and through multilateral and international platforms. We reiterate our unwavering support for the UN Charter, including its three pillars, and our steadfast commitment to strengthening the UN and international system through a comprehensive reform agenda, including through expansion in permanent and non-permanent seats of the UN Security Council. In this regard, we commit to active and constructive engagement in the Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) process on Security Council Reforms with an overall objective of making the UN Security Council more effective, representative, and credible.

We will support meritorious and independent candidates for elections in the UN and in international forums to maintain the integrity and impartiality of the international system. We note with appreciation the UN Secretary General's call for full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this regard, we underscore the importance of achieving SDGs in a comprehensive manner without prioritizing a narrow set of such goals, and reaffirm that the UN has a central role in supporting coun-

tries in its implementation.

We recognize that peace and security in the maritime domain underpins the development and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific, and reiterate the importance of respect for sovereignty, consistent with international law. We reiterate the importance of adherence to international law, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to meet challenges to the maritime rules-based order, including in the South and East China Seas. We strongly oppose any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo or increase tensions in the area. We express serious concern at the militarization of disputed features, the dangerous use of coast guard vessels and maritime militia, and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities.

We are determined to deepen engagement with regional partners, including through information-sharing, capacity-building and technical assistance, to strengthen maritime domain awareness; to counter illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; to enhance their capability to protect and develop offshore resources, consistent with UNCLOS; to ensure freedom of navigation and overflight; and to promote the safety and security of sea lines of communication. We look forward to continuing these discussions at the Quad Maritime Security Working Group meeting hosted by the United States in Washington, D.C., in March 2023. In this context, we welcome the progress made under the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA).

We unequivocally condemn terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations. We denounce the use of terrorist proxies and emphasize the importance of denying any logistical, financial, or military support to terrorist organizations which could be used to launch or plan terrorist attacks, including transnational and cross-border attacks. We reiterate our condemnation of terrorist attacks, including 26/11 Mumbai, which claimed lives of citizens from all Quad countries, and Pathankot attacks. We are committed to working together with our regional and international partners to promote accountability for the perpetrators



Quad Meeting: The 4th Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting at Delhi
"Quad Has Worked So Well Because Of Strong Bilateral Ties"-S.Jaishankar

of such terrorist attacks, including through designations by the UN Security Council 1267 Sanctions Committee. In this regard, we express our concern at attempts to politicize the working of the UNSC Sanctions Regimes and call on all states to maintain the transparent, objective, and evidence based working methods of UNSC Sanctions Committees.

We note with deep concern that terrorism has become increasingly diffuse, aided by terrorists' adaptation to, and the use of, emerging and evolving technologies such as unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and the internet, including social media platforms for recruitment and incitement to commit terrorist acts, as well as for the financing, planning, and preparation of terrorist activities. We welcome the focused discussions on these themes at the Quad Counter-Terrorism Policy Meeting and tabletop exercise hosted by Australia in October 2022. We are pleased to announce the establishment of the Quad Working Group on Counterterrorism, which will explore cooperation amongst the Quad, and with Indo-Pacific partners, to counter new and emerging forms of terrorism, radicalization to violence, and violent extremism. We look forward to its first meeting in the United States in 2023 to continue our discussions on this global issue.

We strongly emphasize the importance of maintaining peace, stability, and prosperity and express our deep concern at the deteriorating situation in Myanmar. In this regard, we emphasize the need for complete cessation of violence, the release of all those arbitrarily detained, resolution of issues through dialogue, unhindered humanitarian access, and transition to an inclusive, federal demo-

cratic system in Myanmar. Towards this, we reaffirm our consistent support to the ASEAN-led efforts, including the work of the ASEAN Chair and Office of the Special Envoy, and call for the full implementation of ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus. We also encourage the international community to work together in a pragmatic and constructive way towards resolving the crisis in Myanmar.

We condemn North Korea's destabilizing ballistic missile launches, including the launch of yet another Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) on February 18, 2023, in violation of UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs). We reaffirm our commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and urge North Korea to comply with its obligations under UNSCRs. We reconfirm the necessity of immediate resolution of the abductions issue. We stress the importance of addressing proliferation of nuclear and missile technologies related to North Korea in the region and beyond.

We continued to discuss our responses to the conflict in Ukraine and the immense human suffering it is causing, and concurred that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible. We underscored the need for a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in Ukraine in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter. We emphasized that the rules-based international order must respect sovereignty, territorial integrity, transparency, and peaceful resolution of disputes.

We welcome the announcement of the first class of Quad Fellows, who will begin their academic pursuits in the United States in August 2023.

We look forward to the next Quad Leaders' Summit being hosted by Australia this year.

We will work closely to align and complement the Quad's agenda with Japan's Presidency of the G7, India's Presidency of the G20, and the United States' APEC host year in 2023.

We will continue to meet regularly to deliver concrete benefits and serve as a force for good, deepening practical and positive cooperation for the benefit of the Indo-Pacific region.



EVENT

The top diplomats of Australia, India, Japan and the United States said Friday their Indo-Pacific-focused bloc is not aimed at countering China but released a statement littered with buzzwords and phrases that reflect growing unease over China's influence in the region. Meeting in New Delhi, the four foreign ministers barely mentioned China by name and insisted that the so-called "Quad" is designed to boost their own national interests and improve those of others through enhanced cooperation in non-military areas.

'India is a critical power, great power,' Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong at Quad meeting

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong on Friday lauded India as a "critical, great power" and said the country's civilisation prowess brought a fresh perspective on dealing with current issues.

Wong participated in the Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting presided by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on the sidelines of Raisina Dialogue 2023 held in the national capital Delhi. Japanese foreign minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken were the other participants who attended the meeting of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) grouping.

"India is a critical power, great power in the region that there is no reshaping of the Indo-Pacific without India. We've seen that India is a civilisational power that brings a different perspective to some of the challenges of these time," said Wong while replying to President of Observer Research Foundation (ORF) Samir Saran on Australia's assessment of India's growth.

Quad powers concerned over militarization of waters around China

The United States, Japan, India and Australia expressed concern over the militarization of waters around China on the heels of a flare-up in tensions between Washington and Beijing.

As G7 President, Japan wishes to coordinate closely with G20 chair India: Japan Foreign Minister Hayashi

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has put a great strain on the global economy, including energy and food security, and Japan is keen to respond to the challenges by working hand-in-hand with India, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said.

In an exclusive interview to media Hayashi cited China's "unilateral attempts" to change the status quo by force in East and South China as well as its military activities around Taiwan as the region's challenges and concerns.

The foreign minister said Japan's revised National Security Strategy views China's current external stance and military activities as an unprecedented and the



greatest strategic challenge in ensuring peace and stability of Japan and the international community.

Jaishankar highlighted resilient supply chain, digital challenge, connectivity at Quad meeting

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday highlighted three big issues that the Quad and the World needs to address, "resilient supply chain, digital challenge and connectivity," at the Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting held on the sidelines of Raisina Dialogue 2023.

"Three big issues that Quad and the world needs to address and I think Quad can address and can make a difference. First, more reliable and resilient supply chain, second digital challenge of trust and transparency and third connectivity. I expect these to be a greater part of our agenda," said Jaishankar.

He also said that new things came out during Quad deliberations.

On Russia's invasion in Ukraine, Blinken said that allowing Russia to do what it is doing will be a message to aggressors everywhere.

"If we allow Russia to do what it is doing in Ukraine then that's a message to the aggressors everywhere that they may be able to get away with it too," Blinken said at the discussion chaired by external affairs minister S Jaishankar and where Foreign Ministers of Australia, Penny Wong and Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi participated.

"For us the future is so much in Indo-Pacific...Even as we are rightly focussed on what is happening in Ukraine as a result of Russian aggression, not just because it matters to Ukrainians and to Ukraine and Europe, but because it matters to the entire world,"

WONG PARTICIPATED IN THE QUAD FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING PRESIDED BY EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER S JAISHANKAR ON THE SIDELINES OF RAISINA DIALOGUE 2023 HELD IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL DELHI. JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER YOSHIMASA HAYASHI AND US SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN WERE THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS WHO ATTENDED THE MEETING OF THE QUADRILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE (QUAD) GROUPING.



Blinken said.

The eighth edition of the Raisina Dialogue, from March 2-4 was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday and chief guest Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni delivered the keynote speech.

The conference, organised under the theme "Provocation, Uncertainty, Turbulence: Lighthouse in the Tempest?" is witnessing the participation of representatives from over 100 countries.

'Quad is not a military grouping': Blinken

"Quad is not a military grouping...but one of the things that we are doing through the Quad is trying to bring together not only governments, academia, experts to look at where we can collaborate together on the technology, on innovation, benefits in other areas that remains to be seen. But clearly, our four countries in particular are very well placed to increase in a variety of ways our collaboration....," Blinken said.

Quad according to the US Secretary of State is a force for good, positive, and affirmative action.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad is not a military grouping, said US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday, adding it is now engaged in working together to help countries to deal with humanitarian situations in natural disasters. "We are working on things that are really critical," Blinken said at a panel discussion of the Quad Foreign Ministers themed "The Quad Squad: Power and Purpose of the Polygon" in the national capital. The Quad Foreign Ministers meet on the sidelines of the eighth edition of the Raisina Dialogue the flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-strategy organised by the Ministry of External

Affairs with the Observer Research Foundation. India, US, Japan and Australia are members of the Quad grouping.

'Quad is acting as a force for regional and global good'

The foreign ministers said the Quad is acting as a force for regional and global good, and it will be guided by the priorities of the Indo-Pacific region through its positive and constructive agenda.

The statement said through the Quad, the countries seek to support the region through practical cooperation on contemporary challenges such as health security, climate change and the clean energy transition, critical and emerging technologies, infrastructure and connectivity.

It also talked about addressing the debt crisis through sustainable, transparent and fair lending and financing practices.

"We concur that the rules-based international order is anchored in international law, including the UN Charter, and the principles of sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of all states," it said.

"We are committed to cooperate to address attempts to unilaterally subvert the UN and international system, in consultation with our partners and through multilateral and international platforms," it added. The meeting came in the backdrop of growing global concerns over increasing Chinese assertiveness in the region.

"Our meeting today reaffirms the Quad's steadfast commitment to supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is inclusive and resilient," a joint statement said.

"We strongly support the principles of freedom, rule of law, sovereignty and territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes without resorting to threat or use of force and freedom of navigation and over flight, and oppose any unilateral attempt to change the status quo, all of which are essential to the peace, stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and beyond," it said.

The foreign ministers of Quad countries also reaffirmed the grouping's commitment for a free and open Indo-Pacific, and said it strongly supports the principles of rule of law, sovereignty and territorial integrity and peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Quad foreign ministers carried out a comprehensive review of the situation in the Indo-Pacific at a meeting presided over by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and attended by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, his Japanese counterpart Yoshimasa Hayashi and Australia's Penny Wong.

"WE STRONGLY SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM, RULE OF LAW, SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES WITHOUT RESORTING TO THREAT OR USE OF FORCE AND FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION AND OVER FLIGHT, AND OPPOSE ANY UNILATERAL ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE STATUS QUO, ALL OF WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE PEACE, STABILITY AND PROSPERITY OF THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION AND BEYOND," IT SAID.



Sunflower knows no bounds



CHANDER P MAHAJAN
Prof. (Er.) Chander P Mahajan is an art critic @ a freelance journalist. The Environmentalists stays in Shimla and Dalhousie, Himachal Pradesh India.

Hiking Alps, Switzerland, in 2017, I found a family of dwarf sunflowers-the so-called 'Leopard's bane'.

Back home, to my delight, I saw 12 feet tall sunflower in the sunny Bagicha gardens of Uma & B K Dass; though the tallest sunflower, is known to have grown over 30 feet, in Germany.

A commonality between dwarf and tall sunflowers are both grown best in full sunlight. A young sunflower's face follows the sun from sunrise to sunset and repeats the cycle until maturity.

Sunflowers are dynamic - they grow in various shapes, sizes, and colors. Each sunflower is umpteen tiny flowers. Teddy Bear sunflowers are bushy and spherical.

■ That they track the sun- many people see the sunflower as a spiritual flower.

Well-known for being a happy flower to brighten one's mood; planting them brings good luck and fills your home with a profound sense of safety and protection.

In China, sunflower symbolism extends

beyond longevity to include good fortune, vitality, intelligence, and happiness.

All that- for those around me who grow, paint, and shoot the flower, but for Van Gogh*.

■ Sad but true, at least, till the Dutch artist was alive. "The sadness will last forever" were his last words on his deathbed, though, at his funeral, his relatives held sunflowers in their hands.

Torture in early life, poverty, and mental illness haunted him. His approach to life darkened when his love was rejected by a London girl; he became lonelier.

Suffering from severe depression, he was left with part of his left ear chopped off. Diagnosed with 'acute mania' Van Gogh is said to have lived with mental illness - with symptoms of hallucinations. He died from an apparent gunshot wound in the belly, perhaps suicide.

■ Years ago, when I called on Babli (her nickname) - in her cozy cottage at Guncha, Dalhousie, she had been home after having lived for years in Germany. I wonder, if she had been painting the same copy of 'Van Gogh's Sunflowers' that she has WhatsApped now; arousing my curiosity to know more about the Dutch artist.

Vimal Jeet is passionate about and possessive of her paintings; mature enough to control her brush strokes and balance the blend of colours. Her style evokes so many emotions. The artist lives in Dalhousie and Jallander.

To fully appreciate the extent of Van Gogh's worship of sunflowers, I had to peep into the fragments of his short-life span, he died young at 37.

Together, the Sunflowers created by Van Gogh make up one of the most famous series of works in art history.

The first series, painted depicts the flowers lying on the ground, while the second set shows a bouquet of sunflowers in a vase; both in France.

Besides, the use of yellow in "Sunflowers," the artist also features green, orange, and a touch of red and blue. In the 'Mix Sunflower' the color range spans from cream to lemon-



"one, very large plant, 12 ft in height, is loaded with more than 55 nos of 7 inches dia., each, flower".

Uma & Er. BK Dass - Bagicha, Shimla HP 23rd July, 2022



Vimaljeet - Babli

yellow, gold, orange, bronze, red, and burgundy.

A large sunflower he had seen in a window near his gallery, inspired his first series of Sunflowers. The sunflower was thick, coarse, and imperfect, its sharp petals and its stem changing in appearance, swiveling with the movement of the sun. The "Rustic sunflower" with a peculiar beauty- that of the real countryside- that of real people.

Maybe, its bright color helped him feel better; he spent his days in the Netherlands, in Paris, or Arles.

Becoming one with the sunflower, he often lived alone in perturbed surroundings. Perhaps, he recognized himself in the sunflower, which he considered a magical living being.

Quite likely, for him the plant represented the different stages of life; it was no less inspiring when it silently disintegrated.

"The sunflower is mine." Van Gogh wrote. He painted a total of five large canvases with sunflowers in a vase, with three shades of yellow 'and nothing else' There were a total of 11 works, one of which was lost during the



Vincent Van Gogh, Sunflowers
August 31, 1887 @ Van Gogh Museum



Divye Duheta Mahajan

August 1, 2020 · 🌻

🌱 If you leave what leaves, it becomes beautiful to stay with what stays. 🌻🌻

Allow nature to take a call on every leaf and silently keep watching. Every moment is beautiful in this creation so every form 🌻🌻🌻



Sunflowers - Anurita Saxena, Angelic Gardens, Shimla
Collections - Chander P Mahajan



Priya Monga



Sunflowers - Kalatop rest house Dalhousie
Oil on canvas

Second World War.

The artist is remembered for his sunflower paintings and for changing the way people viewed a flower's beauty.

■ On Facebook, viewing the sunflowers - shot by Divya Duheta Mahajan, perhaps in Kashmir, is a joy. I love the mood she captured here. The renowned poet; lives in Srinagar and Jammu.

■ Sunflowers of the Angelic Gardens are charming; attract butterflies and birds. Anurita is a great flower enthusiast; the writer lives in Shimla and Delhi.

■ Sunflowers from 'Kalatop rest house, Dalhousie; & the bunch of 'flowers in a terracotta vase' painted by Priya Monga, is an art lovers' delights. The fluency of brush strokes and soft mix of colours make the artwork attractive. The artist lives in Dalhousie and Chandigarh.

Sunflowers are sun worshipers that grow best in spots with direct sun. You can still find sunflowers all over the world-from 'below sea level' to high mountains, from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, and from the Netherlands to the Himalayans.

“Vincent Willem van Gogh was a Dutch Post-Impressionist painter who posthumously became one of the most famous and influential figures in Western art history. Wikipedia”.

Health Benefits of Sunflower

- Reduces Inflammation
- Helps in Improving Heart Health
- Helps in Weight Loss
- Supports Immune System Function
- Good for Your Skin
- Promote Healthy Blood Sugar Levels
- Boosts Brain Function
- Helps Reduce the Risk of Cancer
- Full of Antioxidants, Rich in Minerals
- Helps Detox Your Body

Source – www.smoothiebox.com



Doronicum - in the sunflower family, known as leopard's bane. Alps, Switzerland 8th July, 2017
Exploration: Chander P Mahajan



International trade in rupee currency soon with help of Vostro accounts: Piyush Goyal

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved 60 requests to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs) of correspondent banks from 18 countries, including the UK, Singapore, and New Zealand



Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal

COMMERCE and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on 22nd April Saturday expressed hope that traders will soon be able to settle foreign trade in the rupee currency as several banks from different countries are opening special Vostro accounts with Indian banks. A vostro account is an account a corre-

spondent bank holds on behalf of another bank. These accounts are an essential aspect of correspondent banking in which the bank holding the funds acts as custodian for or manages the account of a foreign counterpart.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved 60 requests to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs) of correspondent banks from 18 countries, including the UK, Singapore, and New Zealand.

The RBI, he said, is in discussion with the central banks of other countries on the matter. "We will soon start seeing operationalisation of this rupee trading in international trade with several countries," said Goyal to media.

He also said that negotiations for free trade agreements (FTAs) with developed regions like the European Union, the UK, and Canada are in "advanced" stages.

Groups including European Free Trade Association, Free Trade Agreement (EFTA), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are also keen to start talks for similar pacts with India.



India, Russia plan RuPay-Mir card use amid West sanctions on Moscow

India and Russia will explore the possibility of accepting RuPay and Mir cards in each other's country for hassle-free payments amid sanctions imposed by the West on Moscow.

IN THE recent high level Internal Governmental Commission meeting on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC), it was discussed and agreed to explore the opportunity of allowing acceptance of these cards, sources said.

The mutual acceptance of Ru Pay (India) and Mir cards (Russia) will help Indian and Russian citizens to make hassle-free payments in Indian rupees and Russian ruble in their respective countries, sources said.

The meeting, co-chaired by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Russia Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov, also agreed to explore the possibility of interaction of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of National Payment Corporation of India and the Faster Payments System (FPS) of the Bank of Russia.

Besides, it was also agreed to look at adopting the Russian financial messaging system, Services Bureau of Financial Messaging System of the Bank of Russia, for cross border payments.

Currently, overseas payments from India and vice versa are through the SWIFT network.

At the given point when sanctions are imposed, sources said, it would not be feasible for India to opt for other than SWIFT network.

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry & Trade of Russia Denis Manturov, in New Delhi, Tuesday, April 18, 2023.(PTI)

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong launched the cross-border connectivity between UPI and Pay Now.

Linkage of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Singapore's Pay Now allows people in the two countries to undertake faster and cost-efficient digital transfers.

It will also help the Indian diaspora in Singapore, especially migrant workers and students, through instantaneous and low-cost transfer of money from Singapore to India and vice versa.

The Pay Now-UPI linkage is the world's first real-time payment systems linkage to use a scalable cloud-based infrastructure that can accommo-

date future increases in the volume of remittance traffic.

To begin with, the State Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, Indian Bank and ICICI Bank will facilitate both inward and outward remittances while Axis Bank and DBS India will facilitate inward remittances.

The UPI was launched in 2016, and since then it has emerged as the most popular and preferred payment mode pioneering person-to-person and person-to-merchant transactions, accounting for 75 per cent of the total digital payments.

The volume of UPI transactions has increased manifold from 0.45 crore in January 2017 to 804 crore in January 2023. The value of UPI transactions has increased from just ₹1,700 crore to ₹12.98 lakh crore during the same period.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) was incorporated in 2008 as an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India.

It has created a robust payment and settlement infrastructure in the country. It facilitates payments through a bouquet of retail payment products such as RuPay card, Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), UPI, Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM), BHIM Aadhaar, National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC Fastag) and Bharat Bill Pay.

"The whole world wants to have a comprehensive economic partnership agreement with India," the minister said.

On the second phase of the production-linked incentive scheme for the textiles sector, he said that extensive stakeholder discussions have happened on the subject. "I am quite confident that very soon we will be able to finalise the contours of the scheme and take it up for approval at the highest level," he added.

Goyal said that Indian textile exporters were earlier facing customs duty disadvantages in developed markets vis-a-vis countries like Bangladesh, but as the government is inking trade pacts with regions

like the UAE and Australia, domestic exporters would be able to push shipments.

On promoting sustainability in the textiles sector, Goyal said that the textiles ministry has decided to set up an ESG (environmental, social, and governance commitments) task force. The task force will come up with suggestions to make the sector more environment-friendly and sustainable.

The textiles ministry has also launched a portal to promote the sale of handicrafts and handloom products.

On the National Textiles Corporation, he said that viability and other issues of its units have been discussed with the Finance Ministry

but no final decision has been taken yet.

On pink worms affecting cotton crops in certain places, the minister said that they are in discussion with the agri ministry and scientists to develop pink worm-resistant varieties.

On exports, Goyal said expressed confidence that the USD 100-billion target for the textiles sector would be achieved.

He also said working with industry would help take the industry's combined domestic and international economic value to USD 250 billion. "It is possible. We will definitely achieve that," he added.

CURTSEY PTI



वास्तविक शिक्षा



कैलाश खोसला



इसलिए आप जितना भी पैसा दें, मैं घोंसले नहीं तोड़ सकता, इस घटनाक्रम के बाद श्री टी एन शेषन जी को आजीवन ग्लानि रही, कि जो एक बालक सोच सका और उसके अंदर जैसी संवेदनशीलता थी, इतने पढ़े- लिखे होने और आई. ए. एस. होने के बाद भी वे वह बात क्यों नहीं सोच सके

एक बार श्री टी एन शेषन, मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त, उत्तर प्रदेश की यात्रा पर थे, उनके साथ उनकी पत्नी भी थीं, रास्ते में एक बाग के पास रुके, बाग में पेड़ पर बयां पक्षियों के दो घोंसले थे, उनकी पत्नी ने कहा दोनों घोंसले मंगवा दीजिए, मैं इन्हें घर की सज्जा के लिए ले चलूंगी, श्री शेषन जी ने साथ चल रहे पुलिस वालों से घोंसले लाने को कहा, पुलिस वालों ने वहीं पास गाय चरा रहे एक बालक से पेड़ पर चढ़ कर घोंसले लाने के बदले 10 रुपया देने की बात कही, लेकिन वह लड़का घोंसले तोड़ कर लाने के लिए तैयार नहीं हुआ, तब श्री टी एन शेषन ने उसे 10 रुपया की जगह 50 रुपया देने की बात कही, लेकिन फिर भी वो लड़का तैयार नहीं हुआ, उसने श्री शेषन जी से कहा साहब जी!, घोंसले में चिड़िया के बच्चे हैं, शाम को जब वह भोजन लेकर आएगी, तब अपने

बच्चों व घोंसले न देखकर बहुत दुखी होगी, इसलिए आप जितना भी पैसा दें, मैं घोंसले नहीं तोड़ सकता, इस घटनाक्रम के बाद श्री टी एन शेषन जी को आजीवन ग्लानि रही, कि जो एक बालक सोच सका और उसके अंदर जैसी संवेदनशीलता थी, इतने पढ़े- लिखे होने और आई. ए. एस. होने के बाद भी वे वह बात क्यों नहीं सोच सके, उनके अंदर वह संवेदना क्यों नहीं उत्पन्न हुई उन्होंने कहा उस छोटे से बालक के सामने मेरा पद और मेरा आई ए एस होना गायब हो गया, मैं उसके सामने एक सरसों के बीज के समान हो गया, शिक्षा, पद, और सामाजिक स्थिति मानवता के मापदंड नहीं हैं। प्रकृति को जानना ही ज्ञान है, बहुत सी सूचनाओं के संग्रह से कुछ भी प्राप्त नहीं होता, जीवन भी तभी आनंददायक होता है, जब ज्ञान, संवेदना और बुद्धिमत्ता हो।

होनी प्रबल है उसे कोई टाल नहीं सकता

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

अहंकार से भरे जन्मेजय के शब्द सुन कर भी, व्यास जी शांत रहे। उन्होंने कहा, पुत्र अपने पूर्वजों की क्षमता पर शंका न करो। यह विधि द्वारा निश्चित था, जो बदला नहीं जा सकता था, यदि ऐसा हो सकता तो श्रीकृष्ण में ही इतनी सामर्थ्य थी कि वे युद्ध को रोक सकते थे। जन्मेजय अपनी बात पर अड़ा रहा और बोला मैं इस सिद्धांत को नहीं मानता। आप तो भविष्यवक्ता हैं, मेरे जीवन की होने वाली किसी होनी को बताइए...मैं उसे रोककर प्रमाणित कर दूंगा कि विधि का विधान निश्चित नहीं होता।

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

कुछ वर्ष बाद तू काले घोड़े पर बैठकर शिकार करने जाएगा। दक्षिण दिशा में समुद्र तट पर पहुंचेगा...

वहां तुम्हें एक सुंदर स्त्री मिलेगी.. जिसे तू महलों में लाएगा, और उससे विवाह करेगा। मैं तुम को मना कर रहा है कि ये सब मत करना लेकिन फिर भी तुम यह सब करोगे। इस के बाद उस लड़की के कहने पर तू एक यज्ञ करेगा..।

मैं तुम को आज ही चेता रहा हूं कि उस यज्ञ को तुम वृद्ध ब्राह्मणों से कराना.....लेकिन, वह यज्ञ तुम युवा ब्राह्मणों से कराओगे.... और

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

व्यासजी ने कहा ये सब होगा..और अभी आगे की



सुन.....।

उस यज्ञ में एक ऐसी घटना घटित होगी....कि तुम उस रानी के कहने पर उन युवा ब्राह्मणों को प्राण दंड दोगे, जिससे तुझे ब्रह्म हत्या का पाप लगेगा...और..तुझे कुछ रोग होगा.. और वही तेरी मृत्यु का कारण बनेगा। इस घटनाक्रम को रोक सको तो रोक लो।

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

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

किसी बात पर युवा ब्राह्मण...रानी पर हंसने लगे।

उस यज्ञ में एक ऐसी घटना घटित होगी....कि तुम, उस रानी के कहने पर उन युवा ब्राह्मणों को प्राण दंड दोगे, जिससे तुझे ब्रह्म हत्या का पाप लगेगा...और..तुझे कुछ रोग होगा.. और वही तेरी मृत्यु का कारण बनेगा। इस घटनाक्रम को रोक सको तो रोक लो।



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

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

वेदव्यास जी ने कहा कि एक अंतिम अवसर तेरे प्राण बचाने का और देता हूं....., मैं तुझे महाभारत का श्रवण कराऊंगा जिसे तुझे श्रद्धा एवं विश्वास के साथ सुनना है..., इससे तेरा कोढ़ मिटता जाएगा।

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

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

लेकिन व्यासजी ने जब भीम के बल के वे प्रसंग सुनाए,जिसमें भीम ने हाथियों को सूंड़ों से पकड़कर उन्हें अंतरिक्ष में उछाला....,वे हाथी आज भी अंतरिक्ष में घूम रहे हैं.....,तब जन्मेजय अपने आप को रोक नहीं पाया,और बोल उठा कि ये कैसे संभव हो सकता है?

ये तो गप्पे लगती हैं।

व्यास जी ने महाभारत का वाचन रोक दिया....और कहा..कि, पुत्र मैंने तुझे कितना समझाया...कि अविश्वास मत करना...परंतु तुम अपने स्वभाव को नियंत्रित नहीं कर पाए।

क्योंकि यह होनी द्वारा निश्चित था।

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

जितनी मात्रा में जन्मेजय ने श्रद्धा विश्वास से कथा श्रवण की, उतनी मात्रा में वह उस कुछ रोग से

मुक्त हुआ परंतु एक बिंदु रह गया और वही उसकी मृत्यु का कारण बना।

हमारे जीवन का नाटक परमात्मा के द्वारा लिखा गया है इसलिए होता वही है जो श्री प्रभु चाहते हैं।

कर्म हमारे हाथ में है...लेकिन उस का फल विधि के हाथों में ही है।

गीता के 11 वें अध्याय के 33 वे श्लोक में श्री कृष्ण अर्जुन से कहते हैं उठ खड़ा हो और अपने कार्य द्वारा यश प्राप्त कर। यह सब तो मेरे द्वारा पहले ही मारे जा चुके हैं तू तो निमित्त बना है।

ईश्वर पर विश्वास रखें!

होनी को टाला नहीं जा सकता लेकिन नेक कर्म व ईश्वर नाम जाप से मानव जीवन में सुधार अवश्य सम्भव है

PEOPLE AND UN

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