

CSIR Newsletter

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Expert Opinions on Diplomatic
Insights from the Ramayana

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The CSIR Newsletter is the compilation of news of international affairs collected from different sources. It also includes opinions and brief news analysis. The CSIR team expresses its gratitude to all sources of information that helped compile the news and generate opinions on the subject.

Opinion

Idea of Rama Rajya: Bharatiya outlook towards world

Sandipani Dash*

On January 22, 2024, Rama Lala's statue was consecrated in the rebuilt temple of Ajodhya city after an almost 500-year-long Rama Janma Bhoomi liberation movement against the mediaeval iconoclastic occupation of an ancient worship heritage in Bharat. Exemplifying the restoration of cultural 'property' as pledged in the Kashi Culture Pathway of the G-20 Summit Declaration 2023, it is a civilizational march towards Rama Rajya that signifies an inspiring governing space of Mahakavya Kalin Bharat, as has been expressed in the form of Awadh Kingdom under the reign of King Rama. Bharatiya visions and actions are premised on the Vedas, which happen to be the most ancient and grandest literary creation of the world. An incarnation of the Vedas, the Ramayana represents Shaastra and Shastra tradition that outline the interrelationship between Bharat and the world. By implication, Rama Rajya stands for its two interrelated facets: discursive capability and preemptive capacity. To put it in a relational sense, sublimity and might in Awadh respectively evoke admiration and awe for herself from the rest of the world.

Upanishad Kalin to Mahakavya Kalin Bharat is a time and space gamut that offers ideational and material justification for Shaastra and Shastra tradition. Mahopanishad says, "*Ayam nijah paroveti ganana Laghu chetasam, Udaara Charitanam tu vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.*" One may attribute a near meaning to the translated words, "Division between 'mine' and 'yours' is a small and narrow way of looking at reality, indulged in by people with narrow minds. For those of greater consciousness, the entire world is a family." The cognition of and connection to the world as a physically as well as emotionally shared space emanates from Bharatiya civilizational values, and its inspirational root lies in her cultural ethos of manifestly diverse and organically one cosmic being.

Bharatiya consciousness of a shared cosmos inspires a just fight in the interest of cosmic order. *Shreemad Bhagavad Geeta* chants, "*Klaibyaṁ ma sma gamaḥ partha naitat tvayy upapadyate, kṣudraṁ hṛdaya-daurbalyaṁ tyaktvottiṣṭha parantapa.*" As the translation of the above utterance goes, "Krushna warns Arjuna against shirking his duty as a protector of his land, and he asks him to overcome his cowardice and rouse himself to fight." A conversation between Krushna and Arjuna on the battlefield constitutes the *Shreemad Bhagavad Geeta*. Inscribed in the Bheeshma Parva of the Mahabharata, it is a dispassionate treatise on action. As the Mahabharata is the genealogical continuity of the Ramayana, the revelation of wisdom at the time of war is a common occurrence. The sage Agastya did recite *Adityahudayam* to Rama on the battle field. In this hymn dedicated to the sun, Agastya advises Rama to destroy the evil force of Ravana, representing material illusion, by taking recourse to cosmic energy. Found in the Yuddha Kanda of the Ramayana, *Adityahudayam* elucidates the process of energising enlightened action.

The departure in approach towards the culture-technology interface, or, in other words, the social character of scientific discovery and invention, is the core theme of the Ramayana. Representing the Rishi tradition of pursuing Vidya, Vishwamitra natures an integral and

organic worldview of the interrelationship between consciousness and matter. In contrast, the materialist indulgence of Ravana symbolises the anti-Nature pursuit of Avidya. As the course of ideational and material contestation unfolds, Rama stands for the Bharatiya Rishi tradition of Vidya, which worships and celebrates nature. When Ravana reaches the upper limit of his domineering expedition towards nature through acts of plunder and slaughter, Rama destroys Ravana in a fierce war in his kingdom of Lanka.

After victory over Ravana, Rama enthrones his younger brother Vibhishana, an enlightened being, to govern Lanka. The material affluence of Lanka deters Rama from returning to his homeland, Awadh. On persuasion to stay back, he proclaims, "*Jananee Janmabhoomishcha Swargadapi Gareeyasee*," meaning that "mother and motherland are superior even to heaven." Rama offers a similar post-victory posture in his prior war expedition against the tyranny of Bali in the Kiskindhya kingdom. Demonstratively, enlightened action prevails over subjugation when Rama wages war for natural justice and cosmic order.

The quest for Rama Rajya resonates in the hearts and minds of Tulasi, Nanak, Shivaji, Gandhi, Iqbal, Lohia, and the contemporary Hinutwa activists in Bharat. As domestic aspirations for governance interconnect with overseas associations, the Ramayana delineates the cultural arteries of civilizational interrelationships between Bharat and the rest of the world. While traces abound around the world, an apparently unknown testimony in distantly neighbouring Africa demonstrates that present-day Ethiopia was originally known as Kusha Deepa. Significantly, the ideals of Rama Rajya, i.e., harmonious application of Shaastra and Shastra, inspire post-independence Bharat to go for enlightened actions in the interest of natural justice, demonstrating her positions on prominent external fronts, including decolonization, global commons negotiation, and Bangladesh liberation.

Essentially, an integral and holistic idea of cosmic life remains at the core of the cultural and civilizational approaches of Bharat to the global community. While culture refers to one's thoughts and actions, civilization is his or her accomplishments. Bharat culturally and civilisationally interconnects with the cosmos through Shaastra and Shastra for truth, consciousness, and bliss in eternity. Hence, the Bharatiya tradition of applying Shaastra and Shastra in harmony for enlightened actions, as exemplified in Rama Rajya, is a way out of the present-day complex dilemma of resorting to either pen point or gun point to draw lines of interface in world affairs through a binary expression of diplomacy or war.

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Shri Ram, Indian history and the principles of a world order

Praveen Kumar*

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, the 19th-century Indian thinker, believed that a nation 'existed in its history'. It is our history that instills a sense of realisation in our values, culture, passions, and aspirations. Our self-awareness and self-realisation are due to our history. A nation that is denied its history is denied the capacity to make choices. History is about the records of the achievements of a nation. The achievements that are made despite the sufferings, hardships, and conflicts in the life of the nation. Thus, history is not simply about the joyous

and comfortable periods in the progress of a nation. Also, a nation may have its own traditions for keeping its history. India's history, for instance, in its earliest times, was preserved through its oral traditions. History did not mean simply celebrating landmark developments in the process; it was understood as a sensible project that should be handled with the utmost care. This was because the generations to come would not inherit the chronology of events alone, but the whole value system that gradually evolved with time. Hence, along with the emphasis on oral tradition, the Indian system understood that the beholder of knowledge should also be the most suitable one to hold that knowledge. Thus, the *Itihas*, or 'thus it happened' are enshrined in treatises like the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and various *Puranas*, among others. Things started coming in written form only with the changes in time and the larger emphasis that the knowledge system should only be democratised because those who really knew were not at the same time the most honest ones, and the knowledge that they claimed to hold was not only distorted but also used for partisan purposes.

India has given people personalities that symbolise history. They happen to be the central figures in the collective psyche of the people. Around them, history is constructed, and people identify them as *the* symbol of the former's identity. Shri Ram, or Lord Rama, is one such central figure in Indian history. The personality of Lord Rama brings to the Indian psyche an ideal person, who is the ideal son, ideal brother, ideal husband, and, above all, an ideal king or ruler. While the personality of Lord Rama represents the ideals, it was indeed a reality because he lived those ideals. The closer we come to our ideals, the more real they are. Thus, Lord Rama has lived in the Indian collective consciousness as a symbol of that era in Indian history when the *Rajya* or *Polity* did not require any coercive intervention of the state. It was a perfect example of just ordering, where one got what was due. In addition, the ruler was sensible towards people's sentiments and opinions. Thus, this was a value-based system where people were concerned with their duties, performed their roles for which they were the most suitable, and enjoyed the amenities provided by the state. The governance was not ruler-centric but people-centric. The king, on the other hand, was obligated to maintain the conditions for a just and peaceful order. This idea or concept of just order, or what the Indian system calls *Dharma-based* order, was not confined to domestic affairs alone. The King, in fact, followed this ideal in dealings with his contemporary states as well.

The larger goal of politics was only ethical, where the people, while satisfying their material desires, never looked at the same as the sole objective of life. This helped the people follow an order where, beyond living, they always looked at life after. This was precisely the reason that a *Dharma-based order* would have little space for conflict and a sense of hierarchical superiority. The knowledge shall reign supreme, but that was not for the purpose of creating class hegemony or dominance, but to create an order where everyone shall have a role, and everyone's role shall be deemed to be significant, too. Meaning, even the class engaged in manual labour shall be seen to be performing a role, and the role *per se* that the person was performing shall not make the person inferior or his functions would not be a source of his discrimination or exploitation in society.

If one looks at contemporary world politics in its historical context, then it would be realised that world history has witnessed conflicts throughout in some form or another. Conflicts in world politics have largely happened due to differences rooted in conflicting ideals. The world order that the global north, or the so-called developed nations of the world, intended to create was largely exploitative and discriminatory. That aimed at creating a hierarchy of cultures or civilisations where some claimed to be superior to others. This is clearly visible in the approach of western nations, or even China, for instance, towards the problem of global climate change.

The effects of global climate change leading to global warming and rising sea levels, shrinking of ice cover, decreasing forest cover across the world, among others, are going to affect the world community as a whole. However, here, too, nations bring in their differences, blaming others for the problem and not realising that the whole earth has one shared future. This can be better explained by looking at their collective psyche, whereby their approach is always influenced by the image of the other. India's approach in its place shall be to prescribe a *Dharma-based* order wherein the larger guiding principle shall be the Upanishadic ideal of वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्, that is, one earth, one family, and one future. The latter was also the theme that was prescribed by the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, while India was assuming the presidency of the G-20. The moto is very clear in its spirit and intent. This does not see the world as divided but affirms that the whole earth is a family and there is one shared future, whatever one's national identity may be.

This is significant because India, as a rising power and largely now seen in the leadership role in world affairs, has not taken an arrogant stand but only prescribed what the Indian Dharma shall teach. The Indian position underlines very clearly that the future goal of the world community is sustainable development, but that is enshrined in Indian culture and traditions. Thus, if one looks at the value system inherited from the past, the larger take for the world is that our role should be to realise the ideal of sustainable development as one family. In conclusion, we can concur with the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Antonio Guterres, who remarked that the ideal of one earth, one family, and one future should not be taken only as a fabulous idea but as a principle that the world should endeavour to realise.

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The epic of Ramayana: The Ishvaku tell-tale

Manan Dwivedi*

The clarion call and the remembrance of Jai Sri Ram, Rajaram! Resonates across the societal and political expanse of the nation and the larger community of the international system. When a nation akin to Bharat adheres to the dictum of idealism, one can take a safe recourse to the argument that the divine right of kingship ruled the roost in ancient India, and when one takes recourse to the idiom of vile diplomacy and cleverness, one can naturally hark back to the narrative of the epic Mahabharata and the chicanery of Lord Krishna. Harking back to the Ramayana, Modi's India too lays stress on the facets of interdependence and globalisation, which have been beautifully explained by EAM Jaishankar in his work, *Why Bharat Matters*, published through the portals of Rupa Paperback. The factoid of Prince Bharata intervening in the forest stay of Lord Rama along with the offer that he should return back to Ayodhyaya and assume the mantle of power of the Ram Rajya. Also, the EAM lays stress on the diplomacy undertaken by Angad and Lord Hanuman when Hanumanji burns down the entire Golden City of Ceylon through his burning tail, bearing the brunt of Ravana's violation of the maxim of diplomatic immunity. Also, the manner in which the present-day Modi denomination is relying on balancing out of the IR parleys of idealism and realism forms a central piece of the tale of the Ramayana and the quintessential Maryada purshottam. The narrative of the vivid Ramayana, the Hindu epic, reflects the glory, grandness, and the aplomb of the Bharat's civilization. The manner in which Lord Rama braves all struggles and

the conflict with the Asura king with the monkey army, is comprehended as an astute case study of one upmanship and morality of the Bharatiya King. Also, the idea of just war is sometimes attributed to the repository of public international law, but if we look back to the dramatis persona of Lord Rama, then the characters of war, such as not hitting below the belt and ceasing all warfare after sunset, seem to be our answer to the Chinese war epic penned by Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

When the nation talks about the idiom of Ramrajya, then it can find echoes inside Modi's strivings to usher in a welfare state through the idea of good governance utilising the skillful facet and the entrepreneurial perch of Bharat's development journey. As part of the trail of Bharat's soft power, it need not be mentioned that the nations in Southeast Asia and the Caribbean are a true-blue cradle of the Bharatiya epics and the larger tenet of the Indic civilization. Finally, we can surmise that the anointed king is considered to be the deft instrument through which good governance can be achieved as a practice in Bharat, and the venerable king, or head of state, serves both as an interventionist and an instrument of philanthropy and national defence in the larger sense of the term.

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Ramayana and the idea of statecraft in IR

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The Ramayana, which conveyed *Bharatiya* ideas on the code of conduct for people, society, states, and the world community, had a greater and more widespread impact on Bharat and Southeast Asian societies. Ramayana's understanding of statecraft, intelligence gathering, diplomacy, and the ethics of war is still relevant in societies. Besides offering spiritual guidance, it also presents significant insights into statesmanship and international relations (IR) as understood in ancient times. The narrative, attributed to the sage Valmiki, unfolds the life of Prince Rama, his exile, the abduction of his wife Sita by the demon king Ravana, and her eventual rescue, incorporating elements of ethics, duty, righteousness, and governance that offer lessons in statecraft and diplomacy.

Understanding the idea of Dharma, or morality, at the heart of the Ramayana is essential to comprehending the political philosophy of ancient India. The main character, Rama, is portrayed as the perfect king (*Maryada Purushottam*), prioritizing the well-being of his subjects over sorrow and selfish ambitions. His adherence to Dharma, despite personal losses, illustrates the principle that the ruler's primary duty is to uphold justice and moral order. This corresponds to a leader's duty in international relations (IR), which emphasises moral leadership and ethical governance towards both their country and the international community.

The Ramayana showcases various diplomatic endeavours, notably through the character of Hanuman, Rama's devotee and envoy. Hanuman's mission to Lanka to negotiate Sita's release exemplifies diplomatic tact, intelligence gathering, and the importance of emissaries in resolving conflicts. His approach balances assertiveness and conciliation, offering insights into the art of negotiation and peacebuilding in IR. The emphasis is on dialogue and understanding the adversary's strengths and weaknesses before engaging in conflict.

The formation of alliances is another theme with significant implications for IR. Rama forms alliances with various groups, including the Vanara (monkey) kingdom and the Vibhishana (Ravana's brother), showcasing the importance of strategic partnerships and collective security. These alliances, based on mutual interests and respect, are pivotal in overcoming Ravana. This reflects contemporary IR principles, where states form alliances to enhance their security and achieve common goals.

The Ramayana emphasises the rule of law and the importance of a ruler's duty towards governance and public welfare. King Dasharatha's decision to exile Rama, adhering to a promise given to his wife Kaikeyi, and Rama's acceptance show the significance of law and promises in governance. In IR, this underlines the importance of treaties, agreements, and international law in maintaining order and stability among states.

Ethical conduct during warfare is another aspect illuminated by the Ramayana. Rama's battle with Ravana is guided by Dharma; he engages in war only when all other options are exhausted and ensures that the war is fought on ethical grounds. This mirrors the just war theory in IR, which stipulates that warfare should be a last resort and conducted in a manner that is fair and just, respecting the rules of engagement and protecting non-combatants.

Sita's abduction brings to light issues of honour, sovereignty, and the role of women in statecraft. Her dignity, strength, and resilience symbolise the nation's honour, reflecting the notion that the protection of the vulnerable and respect for women are integral to righteous governance and societal well-being. In modern IR, this translates into the protection of human rights and the active participation of women in governance and peace processes.

The Ramayana offers timeless lessons in statecraft and international relations. The epic's emphasis on Dharma, ethical leadership, diplomacy, alliances, the rule of law, and ethical conduct in warfare provides a framework for understanding and addressing contemporary challenges in global politics. Ancient texts like the Ramayana give important insights into the foundational principles of governance and diplomacy that are still relevant today.

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Ramayana and international studies: Lessons from the past to the present

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Real-politics can be explained excellently through the Ramayana, which could be a better source than Santzu's 'The Art of War' and Machiavelli's 'The Prince'. Western theories have been given a prominent place in international studies. As a result, only western sources were given a special place in the analysis of international relations. However, the reality is that many theories of international relations that are used today can be traced back to Valmiki's 'Ramayana', Ved Vyas's 'Mahabharata', Kautilya's 'Arthashastra', etc. (Pollock, 1993). Asian countries, particularly India, are gaining influence in the world system, and an Asian-centric analysis of the world system is becoming increasingly relevant.

Theoretical importance of the Ramayana in the present world system

Shri Jaishankar ji, the Foreign Minister of India, says that “the Monkey Army was organised by Lord Rama, which reflects today's alliance. With the help of the Ramayana, we can understand the geopolitics and power politics of that time (Bajpai, 2023).

From an international perspective, the Ram-Bharat debate is extremely significant because it provides insight into the kind of personnel who should be assigned to gather secret information on sensitive subjects. Bharat was informed by Lord Ram that the messenger should always be knowledgeable, adept, alert, and focused, as well as discuss the matters at hand. During the search for Sita, Lord Ram and Lakshman disguised Hanuman before Lakshman; their diplomatic protocol and sending Angad as an emissary to Ravana's court reflect the role of envoy. When Vibhishan arrives to meet Ram Ji, his meeting with Lakshman first also reflects a diplomatic protocol. (Gajjar, 2023)

The dialogue between Kumbhakarna and Ravana gives information about a just war. The Rajdharma and duties of a ruler explained to Ravana by Kumbhakarna are relevant even today for the peaceful functioning of the world order. He also advised Ravana that the king should always seek peace through alliance. Kumbhakarna also considered Ravana's not assessing the enemy army seriously a big mistake. (Mishra, 2023)

Practical importance of the Ramayana in the present world system

The Indian Prime Minister, Honourable Narendra Damodar Das Modi ji, believes that the Ramayana is the main source providing direction to Indian foreign policy. India imbibes the policy of tolerance and harmony from the Ramayana, which provides inspiration to maintain global peace (Amresh, 2020). Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, while referencing Ramayana at the time of Corona, said that Britain would end the COVID pandemic in the same way as Ram had ended Ravana. In a letter written to the Indian Prime Minister during the COVID pandemic, Brazilian President Bolsonaro also compared India's struggle against the pandemic with Sanjeevani Booti and Hanuman, while referencing the Ramayana. There is a lot of diversity in India, yet the harmonious feeling of the Ramayana is prevalent in every person in India. To strengthen this sentiment, the Indian government has planned to develop 15 places, which will be known as the Ramayana Circuit. This scheme is being implemented under the ‘Swadesh Darshan Scheme’ of the Ministry of Tourism.”

The countries of the south-east have special strategic importance for India. The Ramayana can be used as soft diplomacy to strengthen relations with these countries. “Ramayana Festival” is organised by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations for cordial relations between India and ASEAN countries. In the India-ASEAN Summit of 2018, Modi ji said that “Ramayana is an invaluable common heritage of India with ASEAN countries.” In this regard, it was also proposed by the Government of India that a group of Ramayan countries should be formed. The project made for this should include experts from Indonesia, America, Britain, Russia, and Malaysia. To strengthen India's Act East Policy for the countries of the South-East, the Government of India has created a special Act East Department under the Government of Assam.

There are 300 versions of the Ramayana all over the world, including India. Like Phra Lak Phra Ram in Laos, Ramkerti in Cambodia, Ramkiyan in Thailand, etc. So many types of Ramayana demonstrate the intensity of India's historical relationship with these countries. When Buddhism arrived in Cambodia, Ram Ji was presented as a Bodhisattva. In this way, the south-eastern countries have assimilated the Ramayana according to their legal traditions. Ramkiyan is considered the national text in Thailand. In the 18th century, there was the rule of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, whose descendants ruled in the name of Rama; the name of the corresponding king was Rama Dasham. On the Java island of Indonesia, Ramayana is an integral part of their culture.

There is influence of Ramayana even in a country like Japan. An animated film on the theme of the Ramayana has been made by Japanese filmmaker Yugo Sakoke. The film Monkey King was made by Chinese filmmaker Sun Wukong with reference to Hanuman, an important character in the Ramayana. Thus, the Ramayana plays an important role in maintaining India's relations with countries through soft diplomacy.

Modi's visit to South Korea in 2015 brought new progress in relations between India and South Korea. The report presented during this tour proved that Queen Suriratna of South Korea was the wife of Korean King Suro. She went to Korea from Ayodhya in the first century BC. For this reason, many Koreans visit Ayodhya every year because they believe that their ancestors are related to Ayodhya.

Ram-Setu between India and Sri Lanka is the common heritage of both the countries. Ravana 1 satellite was launched by Sri Lanka in 2019. We know that Ravana is the main character of the Ramayana. There has been talk of connecting Ayodhya and Janakpur under the Sister City agreement between India and Nepal in 2014.

Valmiki Ramayana is a major epic. Its social and cultural impact is found not only in Indian society but also in the countries of the south and south-east. The essence of all the elements of the modern world system, like statecraft, good governance, the intelligence system, diplomacy, the morality of war, statecraft, statesmanship, etc., are contained in the Ramayana. In some episodes of the Ramayana, like the Ram-Bharat dialogue and the Ravana-Kumbhakaran dialogue, the art of governance, messenger system, and morality of war are clearly demonstrated. In the present world system, the Ramayana is the main medium of soft diplomacy. It is mandatory for all countries to assimilate the concept of Ramayana to establish world peace.

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News Brief

India and the world

India- Nepal cultural festival held in Lumbini

The rich cultural heritage and customs of the two nations were on display at the Lumbini-based Nepal-India Cultural Festival. The festival, which had a special focus on Buddhism, included a street food festival with Indian and Nepali cuisines, a photo exhibition based on the images of renowned photographer Benoy Behl, and a cultural programme. Monk artists from Hemis Monastery in Ladakh, India, created the Sand Mandala Drawing Art Exhibition. The exhibition offered a thorough overview of the artwork and monuments associated with Buddhism from antiquity to the present. In partnership with Lumbini Buddhist University and the Lumbini Development Trust, the Indian embassy organised the festival.

Source: Nepal-India Cultural Festival held in Lumbini, The Print, December 09, 2024
<https://theprint.in/world/nepal-india-cultural-festival-held-in-lumbini/1879399/>

India, Nepal sign power pact, MoU in renewable energy

Along with inaugurating three cross-border transmission lines, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his Nepali counterpart N. P. Saud signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in renewable energy on January 04, 2024. Nepal also agreed to sell 10,000 MW of power to India over the course of the next ten years. The bilateral agreement was signed by India's Energy Secretary Pankaj Agrawal and his Nepali counterpart Gopal Sigdel. During the seventh Nepal-India Joint Commission meeting, the power export agreement was signed. The National Thermal Power Corporation Limited, India, and the Nepal Electricity Authority also signed an agreement on Thursday to collaborate on renewable energy projects.

Source: India, Nepal sign power pact, MoU in renewable energy, Indian Express, January 05, 2024
<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-nepal-sign-power-pact-mou-in-renewable-energy-9095795/>

Maldives, China agree to 'elevate' strategic cooperation

The Maldives and China pledged to increase their strategic cooperation, noting that the "strategic significance" of their relationship has grown. In a joint press release, China stated that it "firmly opposes" outside intervention in the Maldives' internal affairs. The communique, released on January 11, on the penultimate day of Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's five-day state visit to China, stated that "the two sides agree to elevate China-Maldives relations to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, better leverage the political guidance of high-level engagement, expand practical cooperation between the two countries in various fields, strengthen collaboration on international and multilateral affairs, enhance the well-being of the two peoples, and work towards a China-Maldives community with a shared future."

Source: Maldives, China agree to 'elevate' strategic cooperation, The Hindu, January 11, 2024
<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/maldives-china-agree-to-elevate-strategic-cooperation/article67730447.ece>

Mauritius grants special break to officials for Ram Mandir inauguration celebrations

The Mauritius government took a noteworthy step by agreeing to Hindu socio-cultural organisations' request to give officials a two-hour break on January 22, 2024. This choice makes it possible for worshippers all around the nation to actively take part in the prayers held to commemorate the opening of the Ram Mandir in India. A Government statement said, "Cabinet has agreed to the grant of a one-off special leave of two hours on Monday 22 January 2024 from 1400 hours to public officers of Hindu faith, subject to exigencies of service, in the context of the inauguration of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir in India, which is a landmark event as it symbolises the return of Lord Ram in Ayodhya"

Source: Mauritius grants special break to officials for Ram Mandir inauguration celebrations, WION, January 23, 2024, <https://www.wionews.com/world/mauritius-grants-special-break-to-officials-for-ram-maninauguration-celebrations-679421>

Cabinet approves India-Europe initial pact to boost semiconductor sector

The European Union and India inked a preliminary agreement on January 18, 2024 to strengthen cooperation in semiconductor research, innovation, and technological advancement. Prior to this, on November 21, 2023, under the auspices of the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC), the European Commission and India signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Working Arrangements on Semiconductor Ecosystems, its Supply Chain, and Innovation. Thierry Breton, the European Commissioner for Internal Markets, and Ashwini Vaishnaw signed the initial semiconductor agreement.

Source: Cabinet approves India-Europe initial pact to boost semiconductor sector, Economic Times, January 18, 2024, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/electronics/cabinet-approves-india-europe-initial-pact-to-boost-semiconductor/articleshow/106952903.cms?from=mdr>

‘People-centric partnership’: PM Modi congratulates Sheikh Hasina on re-election

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed India's commitment to enhancing its "people-centric partnership with Bangladesh" while congratulating his counterpart Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh on her election victory on January 08, 2024. The Bangladesh general election was largely seen as partial following a boycott by Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)- the main opposition party. "I also congratulate the people of Bangladesh for the successful conduct of elections. We are committed to further strengthen our enduring and people-centric partnership with Bangladesh," PM Modi said in a post on X.

Source: ‘People-centric partnership’: PM Modi congratulates Sheikh Hasina on re-election, Hindustan Times. January 08, 2024 <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/peoplecentric-partnership-p-modi-congratulates-sheikh-hasina-on-reelection-101704730387506.html>

"India today is proud of its traditions, culture, history": S Jaishankar in Nigeria

In Nigeria, Dr. S. Jaishankar, the minister of external affairs, emphasised that "we are one of the very few civilizations that have survived as a modern nation" and that India is proud of its traditions, culture, and history. Mr. Jaishankar made the comments while speaking to the members of the Indian community in Abuja, after travelling to Uganda for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit. "We are today sending a message to the world, that this is also

an India, which is proud of its traditions, of its culture, of its history," said Mr Jaishankar, who was on his first visit to Nigeria as External Affairs Minister.

Source: "India Today Is Proud Of Its Traditions, Culture, History": S Jaishankar In Nigeria, NDTV, January 24, 2024, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/india-today-is-proud-of-its-traditions-culture-history-s-jaishankar-in-nigeria-4906783>

Garba grooves reach UN: Gujarat's traditional dance form makes it to UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list

On December 06, 2023, Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel announced that the Garba dance, a delightful highlight of the Navratri festival, has been included in UNESCO's 'Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'. In Gujarat and other regions of the nation, the dance style is very well-liked during the Navratri celebration. Garba is a manifestation of the Goddess Mother, and the ancient custom of worshipping her is still being practiced today. In an X post, Patel stated that "UNESCO has recognised Garba, which has come to symbolise Gujarat, as part of its list of intangible cultural heritage."

Source: Garba grooves reach UN: Gujarat's traditional dance form makes it to UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list, Mint, December 06, 2023 <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/garba-grooves-reach-un-gujarats-traditional-dance-form-makes-it-to-unescos-intangible-cultural-heritage-list-11701880354453.html>

CSIR News

- Centre for Studies in International Relations (CSIR) and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) jointly organised a National Seminar on "G20 Presidency & India's Global Leadership Role" on 11-12 January 2024 at IGNOU.



Inaugural Session: Chair: Prof. Nageshwar Rao, Speakers: Shri Amitabh Kant, Prof. M. Jagadeesh Kumar, Prof. Aswini Mohapatra. Welcome Remarks by Prof. Satish Kumar, Vote of thanks by Dr. Himansu Bose.



1st Plenary session: From Bali to Delhi

Chair: Dr. Rajiv Nayan, Speakers: Prof. Amitabh Mattoo, Amb. D.B.Venkatesh Varma, Amb. Ashok Sajjanhar, Dr. Uttam Sinha

CSIR-RTD Series

- CSIR organised a Roundtable Discussion (RTD) on "Deciphering Chinese Nationalism: Perspective from India" on December 02, 2023 at the CSIR, R. K. Puram, New Delhi.



The discussion hosted three key speakers: Senior journalist Prof. Ayanjit Sen, Assistant Professor of Chinese at University of Delhi, Dr. Prachi Aggarwal and Assistant Professor of History at Amity University, Dr. Shachee Agnihotri. The deliberation was presided over by Prof. Aswini Mohapatra, the former Dean of School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University and the President of CSIR, Prof. Aswini Mohapatra. The RTD was moderated by CSIR China group leader Dr. Tilak Jha. Nearly More than 30 to 35 emerging scholars and experts from the subject domain joined the interaction.