

1. FESTIVALS: Ram Navami, the birthday of Bhagwan Sri Ram is celebrated on the ninth day of the Shukla Paksha of Chaitra, corresponding to April 19 this year. The day also marks the end of the nine-day Chaitra Navaratri celebrations. The important celebrations on this day take place at Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh), Sita Samahit Sthal (Sitamarhi) (Uttar Pradesh), Bhadrachalam (Andhra Pradesh) and Rameswaram (Tamil Nadu), thronged by thousands of devotees. Rathayatras, the chariot processions, also known as *Shobha yatras* of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman, are taken out at several places, including Ayodhya where thousands of people take a dip in the sacred river Sarayu.

2. PLOY BY SOME WESTERNERS TO DISCREDIT SWAMI VIVEKANANDA—RAJIV MALHOTRA: “For some time some western scholars are trying to prove that what Swami Vivekananda said was basically borrowed from the West and he said nothing new”, said public speaker and president of Infinity Foundation USA Shri Rajiv Malhotra. He was delivering 7th Chamanlal Memorial Lecture in New Delhi on March 23 on the topic ‘the Future of Swami Vivekananda’s Renaissance’.

The Lecture was organised by International Centre for Cultural Studies (ICCS) at Constitution Club in the memory of former Sangh Pracharak Chamanlalji. Former Union Minister Dr Subramanian Swamy was present as chief guest. Prominent among those who were present on the occasion included RSS Sahsarkaryavah Shri Dattatreya Hosabale, veteran Pracharak Shri Madan Das and other dignitaries. Prof Kapil Kapur, president of ICCS, Delhi, presided over the function. Shri Rajiv Malhotra who has stirred the western intelligentsia with books like *Being Different*, pointed out that What Swami Vivekananda said has already been in our age old

scriptures and our ancestors practised them for centuries. He said the pre-colonial Hindus practised all the things that the colonial scholars say today as their own.

Dr Subramanian Swamy said we are not a composite society, as some people repeatedly try to prove even in our own country. “Our identity is purely Hindu and Hindu mindset is the most crucial thing for us today. Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh International Coordinator Shri Soumitra Gokhale gave a brief life profile of Chamanlal ji. He said “Chamanlalji wrote diaries covering over 27000 pages but no where he mentioned anything about himself”. A book written by Shri Devdatt, a sadhak at Pondicherry, on the history of Nepal was also released at the function.

3. VIVEKANANDA’S MESSAGE IS TO MAKE BHARAT SUPER POWER—DR. MOHAN BHAGWAT:

“My life is not for my comforts, it is for the service of mankind and making Bharat a Vishwaguru. This was the message of Swami Vivekananda to all of us,” said RSS Sarsanghachalak Dr. Mohan Bhagwat in Bhopal on March 24 while addressing a gathering in a national seminar organised by Makhanlal Chaturvedi National Institute of Journalism to commemorate Swami Vivekananda’s 150th birth anniversary year. Kanchi Shankaracharya Sri Jayendra Saraswati and Vice Chancellor of the University Prof BK Kuthiala shared the dais. Kanchi Shankaracharya said that only the task which is finished with wisdom is completed satisfactorily.

Justice (retd) Shri Devdutt Madhav Dharmadhikari, Swami Jitatmananda also participated in the seminar.

Madhya Pradesh Government has decided to institute Swami Vivekananda International Award comprising Rs 50 lakh. Madhya Pradesh Culture Minister Shri Laxmikant Sharma said that

Vivekananda Jyoti Yatra would visit every village and Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of life and ideologies would be included in syllabus from class 3rd to 12th.

4. EDUCATION IS THE PROCESS OF CHARACTER BUILDING - DR SUDARSHAN IYENGAR:

The attempts to turn the Bharatiya education system employment-oriented have hit the entire sector very hard. It is the only cause which can be held responsible for today's poor state of affairs in this sector. The state has failed to act and the commercial forces are freely dominating. It is going to prove costly to the entire nation," said Vice Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapeeth Dr Sudarshan Iyengar, while delivering the third Nanaji Deshmukh Memorial Lecture in New Delhi on March 24. Recalling the DRI founder Nanaji Deshmukh he said, there is very much similarity between the thinking of Gandhiji and Nanaji on education and it could be the best remedy today for this field.

The Lecture was organised by Deendayal Research Institute (DRI) in New Delhi. Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Smt Sushma Swaraj presided over the function. Senior Sangh Pracharak and patron of the DRI Shri Madan Das, RSS Sahsarkaryavah Shri Dattatreya Hosabale were preent for the program. Presiding over the function, Smt Sushma Swaraj said that Bharatiya education system needs to follow originality and not the modern alternatives. In his brief speech, RSS Sarkaryavah Shri Bhaiyaji Joshi said there should be a perfect coordination between the educationists and the policy-makers. He said the policymakers should also bring those who are conducting new experiments in this field with them.

5. "HINDU RATNA" VISHNU HARI DALMIA & DR SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY:

2013 Hindu Ratna were conferred upon the noted Industrialist & Patron and Ex President of VHP Vishnu Hari Dalmia and veteran Socio-Economic Thinker & Janata Party President Dr Subramanian Swamy at a function in New Delhi on 23rd March celebrating 2nd Anniversary of Hindu Helpline. This helpline was started to help Hindus in emergencies related to Travel/Health/Admin/ Legal/Religion etc. HHL has a 24X7 Call Center

& so far over 10,000 Hindus have availed of the service.

Hindu News Network – a concept & initiative by Dr Pravin Togadia was launched at the function by Dalmia ji, Dr Swamy & Dr Togadia. Hindu News now will be available on www.facebook.com/HinduNewsNetwork and www.hindunewsnetwork.org.

Speaking on the occasion, Vishnu Hari Dalmia said, Hindu Help Line was the most needed initiative for Hindus. In day to day life, Hindus face many problems and there was no organization to hold their hand in the times of such difficulties.

Dr Subramanian Swamy said, "Bharat is Hindu Rashtra & Hindu Help Line is a significant step forward to take common Hindus along.

6. KERALA'S MUSLIM MINISTER EDUCATES MEDIA ON 'HINDUTVA' IN SAUDI ARABIA:

Kerala's senior congress leader and Minister for Transport and Electricity Aryadan Muhammed, gave journalists a lesson on the meaning of Hindutva, much to the surprise of everyone present. The question put to the minister was about the relevance of the NSS and the SNDP (two major Hindu organizations in Kerala) in the politics of the state and to the Hindus in particular. To this, Mr.Aryadan, a devout Muslim, but an outspoken critic of Islamic fundamentalism, gave an elaborate discourse in which he dwelt on the Islamic and Christian invasion to our country. He also implied that all Christians and Muslims were Hindus who had to accept their ancient traditions as such. Mr Arayadan went on to ask the media person his name and then pointed out that his grand father or his ancestors were surely Hindus. "Do you have any doubt about it?" – Aryadan asked. Later he said Hindus and Bharat had the capacity to culturally assimilate different peoples and that the Hindus had given shelter to all religions. "That is why we Muslims and Chritians are here" he pointed out.

7. BOOK ON SWAMI VIVEKANANDA RELEASED:

'Swami Vivekananda and Prabuddha Kerala' containing 101 poems, articles etc. by 101 writers / poets of various languages, edited by P Parameswaran director Bharatiya Vichara Kendra and president Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, was released by K C

Joseph, Culture Minister (Congress) of Kerala by handing over a copy of it to VS Achyuthanandan, former Chief Minister (CPM) of Kerala, on March 13 at a function at Vivekananda Institute Hall, Thiruvananthapuram.

P Parameswaran said Swamiji came to Kerala 120 years before and he had deep love for the down-trodden of Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram was blessed by his presence nine days enroute to his 3-day meditation at rock in mid-sea in Kanyakumari.

8. OLD IS TRULY GOLD FOR THESE ACADEMICS: Age proved no bar for various senior citizens who took away their doctorate degrees as the 90th Annual Convocation of the Delhi University (DU) handed over degrees to postgraduate, undergraduate and PhD scholars, amongst whom various retired and non-retired senior educationists celebrated their achievements on March 19.

Usha Saraswat (71), the eldest among all who were conferred degrees, termed it a 'lifetime achievement award'.

"It is great honour to have received the degree at such a senior stage of life. I enrolled myself after retirement as I would sit free at home. I have grandchildren. They were fascinated seeing me study 18 hours a day. They have taken lessons for this and often helped me with notes from the internet. I feel great about it. During my research work, I travelled to Pune, Bombay and several States," said Saraswat. Another doctorate, 64-year-old Dolly Menon, an Economics professor from Lady Shri Ram (LSR) College, said it was her love for education and the competition with young upcoming teachers that made her take up research.

9. ADITYA JHA HONOURED: Adhitya Jha, Chairman, POA Educational Foundation in Toronto, was inducted into the 'Order of Canada'. The citation at the Governor General's website states that Shri Jha was given this honour "For his achievements in business and for his commitment to promoting education and entrepreneurial opportunities for Aboriginal and disadvantaged youth". The 'Order of Canada' is one of Canada's highest civilian honours for recognizing an outstanding lifetime achievement, dedication to community and source to the nationa'.

In Shri Jha's words: "I owe this to numerous individuals along my life journey of five decades, whose contributions have shaped me and helped me to shine.

It has been wonderful journey beginning for first 16 years in a wonderful village setting at the border of Nepal & Bharat that shaped my being and nourished my soul. I realize and recognize that only contributions of few are sung but for each of them there are numerous who have done their service and contributions that is silently but surely remembered on such occasions".

10. FORCIBLE CONVERSION - HINDU COMMUNITY STAGES PROTEST IN PAKISTAN: Members of Pakistan's minority Hindu community staged a protest in Southern Sindh province after a Hindu woman converted to Islam and married a Muslim man, according to a media report on March 30.

The protest and a "wave of anger" within the minority community led to the postponement of polls for the Hindu panchayat in Jacobabad on March 29. Reports from Jhanjhri Street area of Jacobabad said Ganga, the daughter of gold trader Ashok Kumar, married Asif Ali, son of another gold trader Bahadur Ali Surhio, at Amrot Sharif Dargah after converting to Islam, the Dawn reported.

A rally was organised from Janta Hall in Jacobabad against the alleged kidnapping. People marched to the local press club, shouting slogans for Ganga's reunion with her family. Hindu leaders warned that if their demand was not met, the community would observe a strike across the city and start an agitation.

11. PURVANCHAL SEVA SANGAM ENDS ON POSITIVE NOTE: A gathering of service organizations active in the sensitive state of Assam in NorthEast Bharat concluded on a very positive note. Over 50 such organizations participated in this conference called 'Purvanchal Seva Sangam' which was held from February 23-24, 2013. The event was inaugurated by Bharat Sewashram Sangh Swami Sadhananda by lighting the traditional lamp on the first day.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion Swami Sadhananda exhorted the people to render selfless service to the needy and neglected sections of the

society. Gurusharan Prasad, national co-convener of Rashtriya Seva Bharati dwelt on the role of Sewa Bharati and the concept of seva provided by the Rashtirya Seva Bharati.

The valedictory function of the event was held on February 24. Pramod Prakash Shrivastava, IPS (retd) and presently representative of the Government of Bharat on the North East Council was the special guest on this occasion Akhil Bharatiya Seva Pramukh of RSS Suhas Hiremath delivering the valedictory address emphasized on real meaning of seva and the objective to be achieved through these seva activities.

12. INTERNET IS A GAME-CHANGER, SAYS MODI: A day after British Foreign Office Minister Hugo Swire heaped praise on his administration during a visit, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi on March 21 lauded his own government for several technological advances and advocated use of technology by politicians for bringing in good governance, accountability and transparency.

"Internet is a game-changer. Common citizens now directly engage in the policy-making process," Mr. Modi said through video-conferencing at the Big Tent Summit, an event organised by internet search giant Google in New Delhi. Mr. Modi, who is being touted as the first Chief Minister in Bharat to be invited to the Google's high-profile event, was speaking on politics and technology. He said internet had empowered people and made communication with leaders and the government a two-way process. Mr. Modi described technology as the "new town square" and said citizens were now netizens. "This is a wired republic," he said.

13. SENSATIONALISM NO SUBSTITUTE FOR OBJECTIVE REPORTING: PRANAB MUKHERJI: The media is accountable to its readers and viewers at large and, through them, to the entire nation, Rashtrapati Pranab Mukherjee stressed on March 16. Inaugurating the 125th anniversary celebrations of Malayala Manorama in Kottayam, Rashtrapatiji reminded the media fraternity of the key role it had to play in cleansing public life, but cautioned that, in taking up this role, the conduct of the media itself should be above board.

"In our country, freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Constitution and the influence, credibility and quality of our media are well recognised. Such a high standing casts upon the media certain responsibilities," he said and, quoting Gitanjali, stressed that the media should always keep in mind that the words written and spoken must come from the depths of truth and that sensationalism should never become a substitute for objective reporting.

14. FIFTY WOMEN PARTICIPATE IN SEVIKA VARG IN PENNSYLVANIA, USA:

In the midst of the natural beauty and serenity of Saylorsburg, PA, over fifty enthusiastic women gathered at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam for the weekend from March 8 to March 10. Home makers, stay at home moms and career oriented women from Massachusetts to Washington, DC came together for an invigorating two day Sevika Varg. The camp was organized by Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) to provide a platform for socially active Hindu women to explore ways to spread Hindu values to the youth while addressing societal problems faced in the country. The participants shared experiences, learned from each other in a fun way, and came out of the camp with something to take back to their respective home towns.

15. NRIs MARCH IN SUPPORT OF MODI:

Hundreds of Bharatiya-Americans marched in protest against the last minute withdrawal of an invitation to Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi to speak at the Wharton India Economic Forum.

Marching under the banner of a group called Americans for Free Speech, they chanted: "We want Modi!" as the Forum held its conference March 23 afternoon at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Philadelphia.

The march, followed by a series of speeches from guest speakers, was held across the street from the conference to which members of the press were denied entrance.

During the march, a sign was posted outside the conference hall by the protesters that read: "In memory of Free Speech (1776-2013) Killed at Wharton by the English Department."

16. A FRESH BEGINNING MADE: *India-Egypt ties need to be nourished*

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi's three-day state visit to India, which ends on March 21, marks a sense of renewed engagement between New Delhi and Cairo in the post-Arab Spring era. India had remained detached through much of the time that a popular uprising swept through the Arab world since 2011. But as Egypt moves into the next phase of its 'Revolution', it is in India's interest to support the efforts and aspirations of the people of that country who have unequivocally spoken in favour of equality, freedom and democracy — principles that also form the bedrock of the Indian nation. Before Mr Morsi and his Government now lies the far more challenging task of nation-building. It is one thing to topple a regime and quite another to govern a nation. This is a fact that the Egyptian President is acutely aware of. Today, Mr Morsi faces a plethora of challenges at home in Egypt where sectarian violence and street protests have become the norm, the economy has tanked, and employment and poverty are rapidly spiralling out of control. All of this has led to increasing popular disenchantment with his Government, and Mr Morsi's presidency is perpetually on the edge. That at time when he is swamped by domestic troubles, Mr Morsi has chosen to travel to India shows his commitment to bilateral ties between the two countries. Equally importantly, it brings into focus the role that New Delhi can play as Cairo strives for a stable, democratic and prosperous Egypt.

Against this backdrop, Mr Morsi's focus on rejuvenating trade relations between India and Egypt is spot on. As the President himself pointed out, despite the turbulence in his country, Egypt's bilateral trade with India had grown to \$5.5 billion, of which \$2.5 billion was added in the past one year alone. Indeed, the large trade delegation that he has brought along on his maiden visit to India is a definite indicator of how economic cooperation could become the defining characteristic of India-Egypt relations. Already, the two countries have signed seven pacts in fields as diverse as information technology, manufacturing, electronics, fertilisers and renewable energy. Mr Morsi has also brought back

the focus on India's contribution to the Suez Canal corridor project. This ambitious project aims to turn the banks of the Suez Canal into an economic hub that will enhance connectivity between Asia with Africa, and in the process reap enormous benefits for Egypt. If the project fructifies, it will also significantly boost the Indian export industry. Additionally, Mr Morsi has also talked of defence cooperation.

But while New Delhi must respond enthusiastically to Mr Morsi's personal initiative to improve ties, which honestly haven't seen the warmth that characterised the India-Egypt relationship during the heyday of the Nehru-Nasser era, it must also be cautious of the President's avowedly Islamist background. A member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mr Morsi has taken a fairly conservative stand when it comes to issues, such as women's rights, for instance, and his Government continues to enjoy the support of hardline elements like the Salafists. Still, in some cases Mr Morsi has proven to be a pragmatist. His take on the crucial Egypt-Israel peace treaty is a case in point. (*Editorial Daily Pioneer Thursday, 21 March 2013*)

17. HINDUS IN YOGYAKARTA PERFORM

MELASTI: Thousands of Hindus from Yogyakarta and Central Java provinces performed the Melasti ritual on Parangkusumo Beach in the village of Parangtritis, Kretek district, Bantul regency, on March 9, ahead of Nyepi, the Hindu Day of Silence, which was observed on March 12. In the ritual, which started at around 2 p.m., the Hindu faithfuls brought various ritual offerings from the Cepuri area to Parangkusumo Beach, accompanied by the sounds of Balinese music. They prayed for the ritual offerings, which were put on a 50-meter-long wooden raft and then left to float out to sea.

"Melasti is one of the rituals held ahead of Nyepi and this year, the ritual coincided with the Saka New Year 1935," the chairman of the Yogyakarta branch of the Indonesian Parishada Hindu Council (PHDI), Ida Bagus Agung MTN, said. He said Malasti was aimed at cleaning human beings and the environment from impurities. They dispose of the ritual offerings into the sea to symbolize the throwing away of all those impurities.

18. HINDU DEFINED BY NAGPUR COURT:

Lord Shiva, Hanuman and goddess Durga do not represent any particular religion but are regarded as supernatural powers of the universe, the Nagpur income tax appellate tribunal has said.

The observation came when the tribunal was hearing an appeal by Nagpur-based Shiv Mandir Devstan Panch Committee Sanstan against an income tax commissioner's order denying it tax exemption on grounds that more than 5% of its expenditure was incurred on religious activities.

Differing with the I-T commissioner's order, the tribunal said, "Expenses on worshipping of Lord Shiva, Hanuman, and Goddess Durga and on maintenance of the temple cannot be regarded as having been incurred for religious purposes."

The tribunal went on to say that Hinduism was neither a religion nor a community. It consisted of a number of communities having different gods worshipped in different ways. Even the worship of god was not essential for a person who had adopted the Hindu way of life, it said.

According to it, the word 'community' meant people living in the same place, under the same laws and regulations and who have common rights and privileges. This may apply to Christianity or Islam but not to Hinduism. "Technically, Hinduism is neither a religion nor a community," the tribunal said.

19. THOUSANDS GATHER FOR BUDDHA PARK CONSECRATION CEREMONY IN SIKKIM:

Thousands of devotees gathered to witness the consecration ceremony of Tathagata Tsal by spiritual leader Dalai Lama at Rabong, South Sikkim on March 25. His Holiness was joined by the Sikkim Governor BP Singh and Chief Minister Pawan Chamling. The devotees hailed from South East Asian Countries, neighbouring countries, and various states of the country as all over the state.

The ceremony started with offering of prayers at the statue of Lord Buddha by His Holiness where he performed the rituals. Addressing the gathering Dalai Lama said: "This, Tstthagata Tsal, has been developed so beautifully where everyone wants to come and visit. It is not merely for the followers of Buddhism but for the people of different religions".

20. BHARAT TEST FIRES BRAHMOS MISSILE FROM UNDERWATER PLATFORM:

Bharat on March 21, successfully carried out the maiden test firing of the over 290 km-range submarine-launched version of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile in the Bay of Bengal becoming the first country in the world to have this capability.

This is the first test firing of an underwater supersonic cruise missile anywhere in the world and the missile travelled its complete range of over 290 kms, he said. The performance of the missile during the test launch was "perfect". Ship and ground-launched versions of the missile have been successfully tested and put into service with the Bharatiya Army and the Navy.

"BrahMos missile is fully ready for fitment in submarines in vertical launch configuration which will make the platform one of the most powerful weapon platforms in the world," Brahmos CEO A Sivanathu Pillai said.

21. TAKING BHARATIYA MUSIC TO U.S. CLASSROOMS:

Chennai-based Chitravina maestro N. Ravikiran, who developed 'Melharmony' — a concept that seeks to blend harmony, a popular technique in western classical music, with melody from the perspective of the Raga-based Bharatiya classical music — about a decade ago, is now orienting schoolchildren in the U.S. to the concept by holding music classes and workshops.

Recently, a group of students trained by him performed two pieces based on 'Melharmony' — 'Bay of Bengal' (based on the carnatic scale Bangala) and 'Not i' (which, he says, is a pun on raga Nattai).

22. BHARATIYA COW's WITH RELEVANCE TO HEALTH:

The Bharatiya cow has played one of the key roles in the growth of agrarian economy since ages. The book 'Devil in the Milk: illness, health and politics A1 and A2 Milk by Keith Woodard examines the link between a protein in the milk we drink and a range of serious illnesses, including heart disease, Type 1 diabetes, autism, and schizophrenia."

These health problems are linked to a tiny protein fragment that is formed when one digests A1 beta-casein, a milk protein produced by many cows in

the United States and northern European countries. Milk that contains A1 beta-casein is commonly known as A1 milk; milk that does not is called A2. All milk was once A2, until a genetic mutation occurred some thousands of years ago in some European cattle. Interestingly, the milk from Bharatiya cow is A2 milk and the Bharatiya governments are ignorant of the fact

23. 3 NRIs HONOURED FOR PROMOTING HINDI IN THE UK: Three non-resident Bharatiyas and a Nottingham-based organisation have been honoured by the Bharatiya High Commission in UK for their outstanding work in promoting Hindi in the United Kingdom. High commissioner Jaimini Bhagwati presented them shields, shawls and citations in connection with World Hindi Day 2013 on March 19. The awardees are: Mahendra Kishore Verma of York University; Krishna Kumar, chairman of Gitanjali Multilingual Literary Circle in Birmingham; internationally renowned blogger Kavita Vachnavi and Kavya Rang, a Global 24 Association of Poets and Writers in Nottingham.

24. BHARATIYA IT COMPANIES DOUBLE MARKET SHARE IN 6 YEARS: Bharat IT companies accounted for \$31 billion, or 4.8%, of the worldwide IT spending of \$641 billion in 2006-07. This year, it is estimated to be \$77 billion, or 9.8%, of the global spending of \$785 billion, according to research by brokerage firm Angel Broking. The research also looks at 13 of the top global IT outsourcers - eight MNCs and five Bharatiya - and finds that the Bharatiya outsourcers' share in the total revenues of the 13 companies has risen from 7.7% in fiscal 2007 to 14.3% in fiscal 2012, and that of the MNCs has dipped correspondingly from 92.3% to 85.7%.

25. FORCED CONVERSION OF HINDUS IN PAKISTAN JOLTS US OUT OF SLUMBER: Coming on the heels of support in Congress for a Baloch homeland in the face of Islamabad's depredations in the region, a US Congressman has zeroed in on the abduction and forced religious conversion of Hindus in the country highlighted by the case of Rinkel Kumari.

In a sharply-worded letter to Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari, Congressman Brad Sherman urged him to take action to ensure the return of

Rinkel Kumari to her family, pursuant to reports that she had been abducted with the help of a Pakistan People's Party (PPP) lawmaker. In a case that has been widely reported in the liberal Pakistani media, Rinkel, who was abducted on February 24, was forced to marry one Naveed Shah and convert to Islam.

She was subsequently produced before a civil judge twice, but she was reportedly coerced into claiming that she had converted on her own will, even as her family was denied access to her in kangaroo court proceedings that revealed in video clips to be led by a frenzied mob of zealots, including armed followers of the Pakistani lawmaker. According to Pakistani civil liberties activists in Washington DC, Rinkel was allegedly threatened while in police custody that if she did not change her statement, she and her family would be killed.

"Rinkel Kumari's case is just one case of abduction and forced religious conversion in Pakistan," Congressman Sherman said in the letter to Zardari, citing the Asian Human Rights commission figure of 20-25 kidnappings and forced conversions of Hindu girls in Sindh every month. "I urge you to take all necessary steps to bring an end to this practice and other harassment of Hindus in Pakistan."

Hindus, who constituted more than 15 per cent of Pakistan's population soon after Partition, have now dwindled to less than two per cent, mostly in some districts of Sindh.

26. BHARATIYA ART FETCHES \$6.6 MILLION AT SOTHEBY'S AUCTION: Abstract artist Vasudeo S Gaitonde topped the first International Evening Sale of Modern and Contemporary Bharatiya Art in New York by Sotheby's, which amassed over \$6 million, just shy of its pre-sale high estimate of \$7 million and set record prices for four artists.

The 1962 oil-on-canvas untitled work by Gaitonde was bought by a Bharatiya collector for \$965,000. Syed Haider Raza's "Rajasthan I" from 1983, fetched \$809,000, while multiple bidders drove F N Souza's "The Crucifixion" to achieve \$557,000. Additional highlights included Manjit Bawa's "The Black Devi", which sold for \$389,000, and Bhupen Khakhar's "Satsang"(1988), which fetched

\$341,000 — both above their pre-sale high estimates. Out of the 43 works on offer in the "Amaya" collection assembled by collector and author Amrita Jhaveri, 40 were sold fetching a grand total of \$6,694,876.

27. BHARATIYA NAMED TIME INTL EDITOR: Bharatiya journalist Bobby Ghosh has been named the new editor of Time International, making him the first non-American world editor in the magazine's history. Ghosh joined Time in 1998 after 10 years as a journalist in Bharat and two on the staff of the Far Eastern Economic Review in Hong Kong.

28. HOLI COLOURS DRAW FOREIGN TOURISTS TO BHARAT: A penchant for life in technicolour with a dash of herbal colours, crunchy gujias, chilled thandais and soulful ghazals: the heady cocktail is proving to be an irresistible draw for foreign tourists to celebrate Holi in Bharat.

"The situation is a bit subdued this year due to the rape incident and increasing airfares. Yet foreign tourists are opting to celebrate Holi with locals in cities like Mathura, Vrindavan and Varanasi," Gour Kanjilal, executive director of Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), said in New Delhi. "They find the atmosphere here charming during Holi. The food like gujias, drinks like thandais and ghazal music, draws them despite safety concerns," Kanjilal added.

Kanjilal says: "Not only travellers, we get requests from foreign journalists and photographers. The riot of colours is a golden chance for them to capture the 'Incredible Bharat' experience."

29. CELEBRATING THE COLOURS OF NATURE: For hundreds of years, Barpeta residents have been celebrating Holi with colours made from the natural extracts of flowers, trees, vegetable stalks & herbs as taught by Vaishnavite saint Srimanta Sankardeva 400 years ago. So, while city markets are flooded with harmful synthetic Holi colours, the Barpeta Sattr, set up in 1583 AD by Sankardeva's disciple Madhabdeb, uses natural dyes from traditional plants and trees to make Holi colours even now.

Muga silk, roots of the 'aasu' tree, raw turmeric, spinach, neem leaves, beetroot, seeds of 'pooisaak' (a leafy vegetable) and 'daatha' (a vegetable stalk)

are ground and boiled to get colours like red, green, golden and purple, said the sattradhikar of Barpeta Sattr, Basistha Deva Sharma.

"We strictly adhere to the original ethos prescribed by Madhabdeb when he set up the Sattr here. There are certain rules that people must follow when they celebrate Holi in the vicinity of the Sattr. These have been in practice for more than 400 years now. For instance, men do not apply colour on women and vice versa. The younger generation too has adopted the traditional way of celebration and the special Barpeta Holi is an intrinsic part of people's lives here," Sharma said. He added, "Holi is also celebrated as a reverence to farming. The festival continues for more than three days. We make the colours the way Sankardeva made them during his days and only use vegetable stalks and herbs used by him."

In Manipur, the festival is celebrated in Imphal Valley by the Meitei populace with festivities continuing for five days. The fervent spirit here can be compared to that of Mathura, Brindavan and Jaipur, where it is celebrated in its full glory.

30. BLOOD DONATION CAMP ON GOLWALKAR JAYANTI: Govindaraja Nagar unit of RSS, along with Yadava Seva Pratishthan and Rashtrorothana Blood Bank, organised Blood donation Camp on March 17, as part of 107th Birth year of Second Sarasanghachalak of RSS Gururji Golwalkar and 150th Birth Year of Swami Vivekananda. The camp was held at Nachiketa Manovikas Kendra at Govindarajanagar at Bangalore. More than 100 volunteers donated blood on the occasion.

31. SHRI VISHWA NIKETAN:Pravas:Shri Saumitra Gokhale, samyojak Vishwa Vibhag would leave Bharat for the tour of Australia and New Zealand.**Visitors:** Shekhar Patel, Jagdish Sehswani, - USA, Nihal singh Agar – Australia, Chamanlal Gohil – UK, Pt Umanath Shastri – Mauritius, Moutuma Christian – Reunion Islands.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Worship of God, worship of the holy ones, concentration and meditation, and unselfish work, these are the ways of breaking away from Maya's net; but we must first have the strong desire to get free. – Swami Vivekananda

JAI SHREE RAM