



Newsletter for the month of April 2019

India

General Elections 2019:



*PM Narendra Modi cast his vote on 23 April
Photo: NTB/Scanpix*

The General Elections are currently being held in the world's largest democracy, India, in seven phases from 11th April to 19th May 2019 to constitute the 17th Lok Sabha (House of the People) and the Lower House of the Parliament. About 900 million Indian citizens are eligible to vote in one of the seven phases depending on the region. Four phases of the 2019 general elections have already been taken place during the month of April. The Election Commission of India, an autonomous constitutional authority, is responsible for administering election processes in India for all elections.

Jallianwala Bagh massacre centenary:



*PM Narendra Modi paid tribute to the martyrs of the
Jallianwala Bagh massacre*

On 13 April, Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to the martyrs of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. He stated: "Today, when we observe 100 years of the horrific Jallianwala Bagh massacre, India pays tribute to all those martyred on that fateful day. Their valour and sacrifice will never be forgotten. Their memory inspires us to work even harder to build an India they would be proud. President Ram Nath Kovind also paid tribute and stated that a 100 years ago today, India's beloved freedom fighters were martyred at Jallianwala Bagh. He also stated that

this was a horrific massacre, a stain on civilisation, and that this day of sacrifice could never be forgotten by India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi awarded Russia's highest civilian award: On 12 April, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reported that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been awarded the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, the highest civilian award of the Russian Federation through a Presidential decree. The award was being given to the Prime Minister for his distinguished achievement in developing the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between Russia and India, and deepening the friendly relations between the peoples of the two countries. Since its inception in 1998, the award has been conferred on 18 distinguished personalities. India greatly appreciated this honour bestowed upon the Prime Minister by the President of the Russian Federation.

Indian States / Festivals

West Bengal:



Victoria Memorial, Kolkata, West Bengal
Photo: Flickr.com

West Bengal is located on the eastern coast of India, between the Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal. With an estimated GDP of approx. USD 180 billion in 2018-2019, West Bengal's economy ranks 6th among India's 33 states and union territories, and

it is a fast growing state economy with GDP growth of 16.1% (2017-18). Agriculture is the leading economic sector in the state and today, West Bengal is etching its own niche as a preferred investment destination in the country, backed by favourable demographics, strategic location, a relentless desire for 'parivartan' (change) and implementation of business-friendly policies and execution. The state has 12 growth centres for medium and large scale industries, and had 7 operational Special Economic Zones (SEZs) as of December 2018. The major industrial areas are Haldia, Kolkata, Asansol-Durgapur region and Kharagpur. The state looks for collaborations spread over a multidimensional spectrum of sectors including Agri-Business, IT & ITeS, MSME & Skills, Hospitality & Tourism, Logistics & Transport, and Infrastructure.



New Town, fast emerging business district of Kolkata
Photo: Nkrealtors.com

The Bengal Global Business Summit is an annual flagship event organized by the Government of West Bengal which displays the state's pro-business environment and offers business partnership opportunities to the global community. The Bengal Global Business Summit 2018 attracted the participation of over 4000 delegates from across India and 32 countries, and Rs 2.2 lakh crore worth investments were proposed. Other major initiatives taken by the state government to

promote West Bengal as an investment destination include (i) introduction of West Bengal Information Technology and Electronics Policy 2018 which has envisaged West Bengal as one of the leading states in India in the IT, ITeS, ICT and ESDM sectors, and (ii) launching of the Silicon Valley IT hub project in August 2018 to attract investments in IT/IteS/ICT and create state-of-the-art ecosystem for new technologies and innovation. Moreover, West Bengal attracts a large number of tourists every year due to its mesmerizing landscapes, blossoming tea gardens, plentiful wildlife and ancient temples. Also, the state capital Kolkata is known as the cultural capital of India and has magnificent British colonial landmarks including government buildings and the iconic Victoria Memorial.

Baisakhi Festival:



*Baisakhi Festival
Photo: Tripsavvy.com*

The month of April was the month of festivals in India. A number of festivals were celebrated including (i) Ram Navami, birthday of Lord Rama; (ii) Gudi Padwa in Maharashtra, (iii) Rongali Bihu in Assam, (iv) Gangaur in Rajasthan and (v) Baisakhi festival in Punjab. The annual Baisakhi festival, which took place on 14 April this year, is celebrated as a combined harvest festival, a solar new year festival and

commemoration of the founding of the Khalsa (Sikh brotherhood). Baisakhi is celebrated with feasting, bhangra dancing, folk music and fairs throughout the state of Punjab, particularly in Amritsar where the area surrounding the Golden Temple becomes carnival-like. Also in the morning on Baisakhi, Sikhs visit the Gurudwara to attend special prayers, and visit the Anandpur Sahib where the Khalsa was pronounced.

International commercial & business activities in India

4th India International Dairy Expo (IIDE): The 4th India International Dairy Expo was organized by the Indian Dairy Association (WZ) and Koelnmesse YA Tradefair Pvt. Ltd. from 3 to 5 April at Bombay Exhibition Centre, Mumbai. At the Expo, 182 exhibitors including 27% foreign exhibitors displayed technologies and innovations to facilitate sustainable growth of the dairy industry. 5,227 visitors attended the exhibition, including visitors from all the regions of India and from neighbouring countries.

India-Norway:

Norwegian Turban Day:



Ambassador Krishan Kumar and PM Erna Solberg at Norwegian Turban Day

On 13 April, the Norwegian Turban Day was organized by the non-profit organization Turbandagen in Oslo for the 10th consecutive year, with the aim of demystifying the turban and to share knowledge about the culture, religion and traditions of the Sikhs with the rest of the Norwegian population. About 20,000 people attended the event, including Norwegian PM Erna Solberg and Shri Krishan Kumar, Ambassador of India to Norway. PM Solberg stated that the most important aspect regarding the Norwegian Turban Day was that the Sikhs and the Indian culture could be shown in such a positive way, and she also highlighted the importance of diversity and stated that it was a pleasure to see so many wonderful, colourful turbans at one place. Ambassador Kumar congratulated the organizers for organizing the Norwegian Turban Day. He highlighted the contributions made by the Sikh Community in Norway.

Indian Community:

Presentation of books to HumSam Library:



Presentation of books to HumSam Library

The Embassy presented a set of 51 selected books on India entitled “Bharat Ek Parichay (Know India): Sharing Knowledge with the World” to “Hum Sam

Biblioteket” library, University of Oslo (UiO) for its collection. These books provide quality resource material for all those interested in obtaining information about India. The basic idea is to acquaint them with India by providing authentic and uncontroversial books. As part of Public Diplomacy outreach, the Government of India decided to present the set of books to the libraries of the world’s prestigious universities and institutions.

Lecture on Mahatma Gandhi at Schools:



As part of the outreach programme on the occasion of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Embassy organized lectures on the life and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi at Hovseter School, Øraker School, Valle Hovin Videregående School and Blindern Videregående School on 4, 11, 24 and 25 April. Officers from the Embassy gave the presentations.

Hungama Festival: A renowned Hindustani Vocalist Ms. Madhumita Ray visited Norway to participate at Hungama Festival – Mega Show 2019 on 27th April, 2019 in Oslo. Ms. Madhumita Ray’s visit was sponsored by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi. She accompanied by Mr. Patrick Vedlog, a Norwegian Flutist and Mr. Tarek Datta, Tabla Player gave a great performance. The event was organized by Ms. Richa Chandra of the Indian Rhythms.