

## Message of H.E. Sibi George, Ambassador of India to Kuwait on the occasion of the 73rd Republic Day of India

On this auspicious occasion of the Republic Day of India, I have the pleasure to convey my warm greetings and felicitations to all Indian nationals, persons of Indian origin, and friends of India in the friendly State of Kuwait. I avail this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, and His Highness Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait for their commitment to further strengthen the close and friendly bilateral relations between India and Kuwait.

Republic day is a very important occasion in the history of our country, as it was on this day, 26 January 1950, that India became a Republic by adopting a visionary constitution and emerged as the largest democracy of the world. The Constitution, which is based on our civilizational values and ethos, is an eternal



source of guidance and inspiration for over 1.3 billion people of India. It is not just a basic law of the land, it also serves as a scripture for social

and economic transformation of our nation. After seven decades, India not only continues to be a thriving democratic country but also

the fastest growing major economy in the world.

This year's Republic Day is of special significance as it comes during the 75th anniversary of India's independence, which is being celebrated in India and abroad as Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. For every Indian, it is an occasion to remember and pay respects to our freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives to give us a free India and to the many who contributed in building a New India. It is also an occasion to pay our homage to the thousands of members of our armed forces who made the supreme sacrifice for protecting our freedom and securing our borders.

Today, as we celebrate the 73rd Republic Day, we feel proud of India's many achievements. Our achievements in the fields of science, technology, space, nuclear energy, sports and culture have all been impressive.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# Naturō

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Government of India on the Country's Glorious

# **Republic Day**

**Over 1,000,000 Indians proud to share in the  
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# Tourism revival measures in India

**T**ourism in India has significant potential considering the rich cultural and historical heritage of the country and the diversity of its terrains, climatic conditions, biosphere and ecology. The travel tourism and hospitality industry is considered one of the key propellants as the country seeks to revive its economic growth and development in the aftermath of devastations suffered due to global pandemic.

Tourism is an important source of foreign exchange in India similar to many other countries. The foreign exchange earnings from 2016 to 2019 grew at a CAGR of 7 percent until



the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC), India ranked 10th among 185 countries in terms of travel and tourism's total contribution to GDP in 2019. During 2019, the contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was 6.8 percent of the total economy.

In line with global trends, Indian travel, tourism and hospitality industry suffered severe setbacks in 2020 from repercussions of the global pandemic. However, the industry as a whole has been amazingly resilient with signs of

revival that were apparent last year now being buttressed further. The development of modern infrastructure in the hospitality, wellness and healthcare sectors, as well as significantly improved connectivity through a vast and interconnected network of road, rail, water and air links have added impetus to the resurgence of travel and tourism in India.

Tourism and hospitality is fast emerging as one of the key drivers of growth in the services sector, on the back of several support measures and new initiatives announced by the government. Some of the supportive steps to revive the industry includes extending a loan of up to Rs1 million to stakeholders in travel and tourism with a 100 percent guarantee on the loan from the Ministry of Tourism, as well as providing up to Rs100,000 in loans to registered tourist guides.

Other initiatives intended to drive tourism to the country include a decision to introduce e-Visas for citizens of more than 165 countries around the world, with duration that can go up to a year; a multiple 5-year e-Tourist visa that facilitates repeated entries and exits; a one-month e-Tourist visa with dual entry and an e-Conference visa for government and public-sector employees, are some of the initiatives introduced recently. In June last year, with the aim of further boosting the industry, the Government also launched a special free visa scheme that offers 500,000 free visas to foreign tourists until March 2022.

While India's position on the World Tourism Index had fluctuated between 62 and 65 from 2009 to 2013, it soared to reach 34th spot in just

a few years after 2014. Today, the Indian tourism economy has become not only the world's 7th largest, but it is also the world's third largest when it comes to health tourism as well, with the country accounting for more than 20 percent of global medical tourism.

The medical tourism sector has grown by more than 350 percent since 2014 until this

growth was disrupted by the pandemic in 2020. With treatment costs in India up to 50 percent less expensive than in the United States and Europe, medical tourism is poised to once again make steady gains. Places with greater health infrastructure will have better tourism opportunities. Hospitality and hospitalization apparently work in tandem.

## Message of H.E. Sibi George, Ambassador of India to Kuwait on the occasion of the 73rd Republic Day of India

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

India today is a land of billion opportunities. While we are fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, our collective resolve has ensured that our economy has forged ahead in these challenging times. India's IT sector has rose up to the occasion by delivering

digital solutions across the globe. India's unicorn club continues to grow and today our country is home to the third largest number of unicorns in the world. India's start-up space is buzzing with unprecedented enthusiasm and activity on the back of creativity, imagination and technology breakthroughs.

We must also be proud of the fact that despite the pandemic challenges, India remained a trusted partner in the global supply chains. India is in the process of further integrating its economy with the international economy by entering into free trade agreements with partner countries. Innovation, new technology, renewed and reinvigorated spirit of entrepreneurship of Indians have all been important factors in India retaining its status as the primary destination for global capital. There has never been a better time to invest in India than now, as modernization of India's physical and digital infrastructure got an unprecedented momentum. India is moving ahead with the spirit of 'Make in India, Make for the World' as its youth is fully geared up to take the economy to newer heights. Today, we are on the right track to build an Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India), which envisages a merger of the local with the global. No wonder that India is rightfully being considered the key driver of a post COVID-19 global growth recovery.

Despite the many challenges of COVID-19 pandemic, India's management of not only the pandemic but also the macro-economic situation and the overall governance have been remarkable. A year from the date of launch of the world's largest vaccine campaign, we successfully administered 160 crore (1.6 billion) COVID vaccine doses, an unparalleled global feat. In this crucial hour of crisis for humanity, India stood true to its civilizational ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (World is one family). It was guided by the vision 'One Earth, One Health' in saving crores of lives by providing necessary medicines and vaccines to many countries and rightfully justified its credentials as the 'Pharmacy of the World'. It continues to lead the global fight against COVID-19; its supply of medicines and vaccines and highly talented human resources forms the core of the global recovery efforts.

Today, India has emerged as a nation that inspires the world and is a leading country in the comity of nations contributing immensely to world peace, stability and prosperity. The vision of creating an environment of peace and security to ensure a better world for the entire humanity has always been the guiding spirit of India's foreign policy. India is currently in the United Nations Security Council as a non-

permanent member. India places an undeterred faith and belief in multilateral approach and has always taken the lead on issues of global importance such as fight against cross-border terrorism, climate change, energy security, food security, and the reform of multilateral institutions, including the UN Security Council.

At the bilateral level, this year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait. Our geographic proximity, historical trade links, cultural affinities, people to people connect and growing cooperation in key areas of mutual interest continue to strengthen and broaden our partnership. Our high-level visits and exchanges continue to impart further momentum to a relationship which is firmly on an upward trajectory. Our bilateral trade and investment ties continue to remain strong despite the adverse impact of the pandemic and its associated precautionary restrictions.

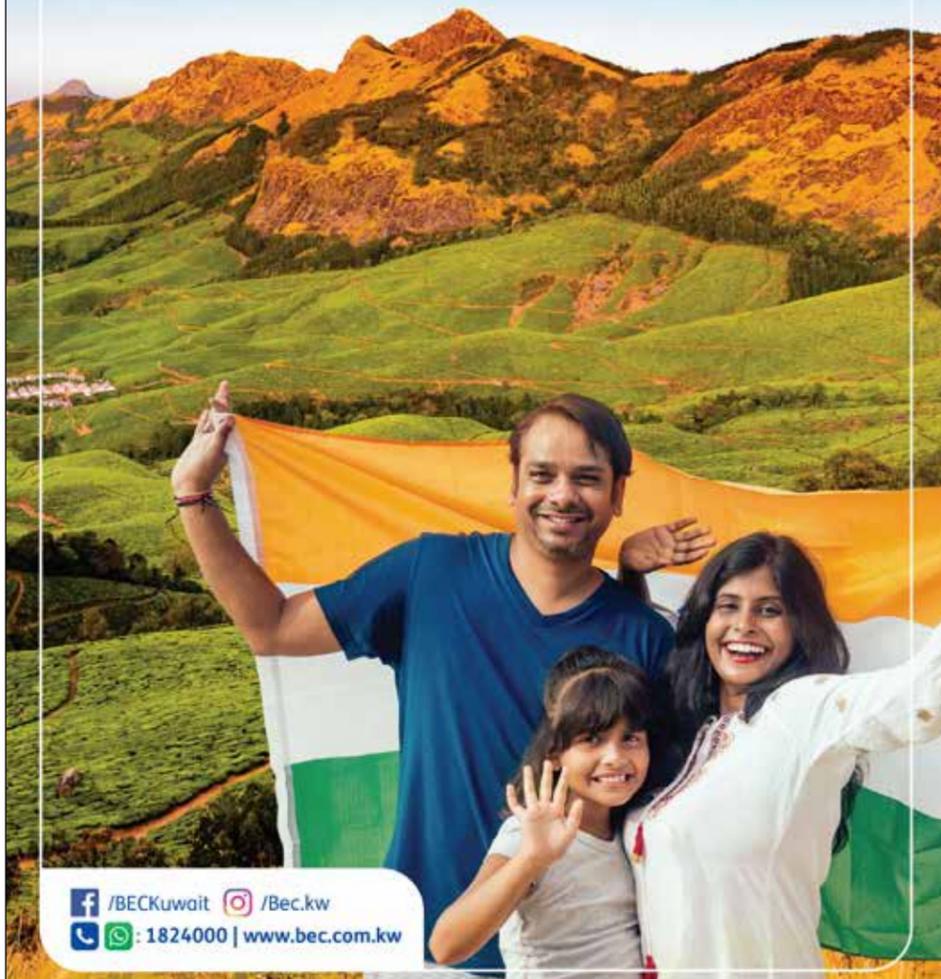
Our bilateral ties are time tested, built over strong foundations by our peoples over centuries based on mutual trust and respect. Over time, nurtured by vibrant people to people connect and civilizational affinities, the partnership has blossomed into a long-standing dynamic partnership. I am confident that in the coming years this relationship will continue to prosper and evolve into a new age, New India-New Kuwait partnership connecting the visions of the leadership of our two countries for mutual development and progress of our peoples.

The Indian Community in Kuwait has always played a commendable role in building our bilateral relations. During the last two years we have seen how this vibrant community came together and worked closely with the Embassy in addressing the many challenges associated with the COVID 19 pandemic that we faced. I thank our doctors, nurses and other medical professionals who are our frontline warriors in the fight against the pandemic. I also thank our scientists, our engineers and other professionals and our teachers who are among the unsung heroes in the fight against the pandemic. I salute our children who continue to face the many challenges of their school days with extraordinary resilience and understanding. I also thank the Indian Community Support Group and the many associations and groups, who individually and collectively, joined hands with the Embassy and have been important pillars in our collective struggle to help hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters in need. The fight against the pandemic is far from over. In coming weeks and months, we will continue to work together to ensure the welfare of the Indian community in Kuwait and to help them face the challenges of the new variant.

Once again, on this joyous and proud occasion of the 73rd Republic Day of India, I wish every Indian in Kuwait and all friends of India in Kuwait good health and happiness.

**WISHING INDIA A HAPPY REPUBLIC DAY!**





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# The flowing success



**BHARAT LAL**  
 Additional Secretary and Mission Director, National Jal Jeevan Mission. The article has been co-authored by Manoj Kumar Sahoo, Director, Dept. of Drinking Water & Sanitation, and A. Muralidharan, Deputy Advisor, Dept. of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India. [This article was reproduced from 'Indian Perspectives', a magazine of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs].



India Commission (NITI Aayog) Composite Water Management Index predicts a 6 percent gross domestic product (GDP) loss due to decreased water availability in India. Therefore, water conservation is essential not only to overcome shortages but also for climate change risk preparedness and socio-economic development. Over the past few years, the Indian government has been making sustained and people-centric efforts to promote water conservation and supply. It has launched several schemes, including the ambitious Jal Jeevan Mission, to ensure that water does not become a limiting factor for the nation's socio-economic development.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, through his monthly radio programme Mann ki Baat,

has appealed to Indians for water conservation and under his leadership, the government is undertaking several initiatives to promote water conservation activities across the country.

Vagaries of rainfall: Hydrologically, India is not endowed with water equity, both temporally and geographically. From June to September, the South-West monsoon contributes 70 percent of total rainfall while the North-East monsoon from October to December contributes 30 percent. But there is an enormous regional disparity as average rainfall varies from more than 2,000 mm in the Western Ghats and Sub-Himalayan areas of the North-East to less than 500 mm in western Rajasthan and the Deccan Plateau. On an average, India has 130 rainy days and more than 50 percent of annual precipitation takes place in less than 100 hours.

Groundwater use, considered a lifeline in most parts of the country, is also increasing. India's groundwater extraction is over twice as much as the US and China put together. With the dwindling per capita water availability, over-exploitation of groundwater and inadequate storage availability, the Prime Minister's appeal is timely for addressing this critical issue. Unless addressed now, the issue can become an impediment to our rapid socio-economic development.

and Sanitation Management Organization, to plan and implement decentralized, demand-driven and community-managed water supply systems in the villages. The integrated water management approach became very successful in Gujarat. As compared to 2004, by 2017, Gujarat had a 50 percent increase in the utilizable groundwater recharge and is continuously improving. Since 2001, agriculture production in the state has increased by 255 percent. Today, more than 83 percent of rural households in Gujarat have an assured tap water supply and more than 76 percent of families are regularly paying monthly water service charges.

Breaking the silo approach: On a national level, in early 2019, PM Modi created the Ministry of Jal Shakti by bringing together all related ministries and departments under one umbrella. Demand and supply, quality and access. The move meant that water, in all its manifestations, including demand and supply, quality and access could be tackled in a holistic manner. This integrated approach to water management focussed on improving surface and groundwater availability; reversing the depletion of groundwater; improving water-use efficiency; improving service delivery in terms of provision of potable water to every household; addressing water quality issues and sustaining the Open-Defecation Free (ODF) status achieved through Swachh Bharat Mission.



A water treatment plant and clear water reservoir at Dantiwada, Gujarat



Women in Indian villages are trained in water quality surveillance using Field Test Kit (FTK)

### The Gujarat model

Water being a state subject in India, states are empowered to enact laws for its regulation. The reason for the Prime Minister's call for a people's movement in water conservation can be traced back to his pioneering role in integrated water management in Gujarat as the then Chief Minister of the State.

After taking over as the state's Chief Minister in October 2001, he took priority measures to provide safe drinking water in drought-affected areas of the state. He also introduced several developmental initiatives to promote integrated water management to meet the increasing water demand of growing economic activities. The measures included people's participation in all water conservation and management efforts like rainwater harvesting, artificial recharge with scientific planning and monitoring, strengthening of existing canal systems and building new dams like the Sardar Sarovar dam, and distribution canal network.

He also focussed on educating farmers in water conservation and the creation of the Water

On 15 August, 2019, PM Modi launched the ambitious Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) for providing household piped drinking water supply to every rural home by 2024. The budget allocation for the mission in 2020-21 was INR 50,011 crore. In a short span of 18 months, the percentage of households with tap connections has increased to 7.30 crore (38.15% increase). "Just 1.5 years ago, 3.5 crore out of 19 crore rural families in the country had piped drinking water connections. After the launch of Jal Jeevan Mission, about 4 crore new families have piped drinking water connections in such a short time", said PM Modi.

JJM has a holistic approach to water supply, service, delivery and scientifically addresses source sustainability, water supply, greywater treatment and re-use, and water works operation and maintenance. Every village prepares a one-time plan for five years called the Village Action Plan (VAP) capturing these details. Funds are dovetailed through the convergence of several rural programs at a village level. The focus has shifted to the assured supply of potable water to every home rather than mere infrastructure creation.

The global pandemic has made us realize that water is key to public health and productivity. The Prime Minister's timely call to all citizens for action on water conservation has generated enthusiasm among all key stakeholders to add their strength for the greater good of water security for all. The momentum thus generated from the success of various government initiatives needs to be maintained for ensuring water is both available and not destroyed, as mentioned in Yajurveda (an ancient Vedic Sanskrit text): "Amirtham vaaapaha; amirthasya aantharithai" (let water be ever-present and not destroyed).

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# Culture defining handicrafts

Handicrafts are often considered a reflection of the culture and traditions of a country. Passed down through the centuries and perfected over generations by a dedicated and talented pool of artisans and craftspeople, handicrafts contribute to a country's cultural heritage.

A microcosm of the immense and unique handicraft talent in the country, including in traditional paintings, handlooms, handicrafts, jewelry, food craft, and more are on display at the Indian pavilion at the ongoing Expo2020 in Dubai.

Here is a look at a selection of superb handicrafts from across India that reveal the dexterity of craftspeople, both from ancient times and today.



**Sitalpati Mats, Goalpara, Assam:** Once synonymous with Assamese summers, these mats are made from murta reeds that grow in the marshes around the state. These are dried and stripped, then bound together by hand-weaving. Once the artisans finish weaving the mats they are sometimes dyed using natural pigment extracts while others are hand-painted with traditional designs. Sitalpati stays cool even in toasty weather, and hence the cottage craft's popularity in eastern India. But deforestation and loss of wetlands in the state means that the raw material used to make the mats is often hard to come by.



**Phad Painting, Shahpura, Rajasthan:** Long before the printing press was invented and people still relied on oral traditions to pass down their collective history, there was Phad painting. After listening to priests in temples singing legends of Hindu gods, artists in ancient Shahpura came upon the idea of drawing the stories on a long scroll in a sequential manner, and that is how phad, which means to read a mythological story through pictures, came to be. Back in those days, epics such as the Ramayana and Hanuman Chalisa and deities such as Pabuji, Devnarayan and Ram Dala with the accompanying prayers were painted on 5x30ft khadi tapestries that told the whole story.

**Rogan, Nirona, Gujarat:** A 300-year-old

tradition that once flourished in Gujarat's Kutch region, 'oil-based' or 'Rogan' in Persian, painting uses the thick residue formed when castor oil is heated and cast into cold water. After it is mixed with natural colors, the residue is drawn out into a fine 'thread' with a wooden stick and then applied to cloth.



Lack of awareness took the craft to the brink of extinction as entire villages that practiced it switched to other trades. Recently, it has been experiencing a boom with efforts being made to preserve the art form. Rogan motifs, which once graced mainly ghaagra-choli, bridal trousseaus, bed sheets and tablecloths, now adorn more contemporary items.

**Bidri Artwork, Bidar, Karnataka:** It is an ancient art dating back to the 1400s, bidriware designs typically borrow heavily from Islamic art and Mughal-era motifs, with solid geometric lines interspersed with depictions of flowers and vines.



Modeled using a wooden cast, bidri is made from an alloy of zinc and copper. After hand-filing and smoothing the cast alloy, the product is dipped in a copper sulfate solution to blacken it and then artists carve intricate patterns on it. With a chisel and hammer, silver wire is then inlaid in the grooves. Many hours of polishing and smoothing later, the piece is dipped in a solution of water and sand taken specifically from a dark, little-exposed corner of the 15th-century Bidar Fort, before the product is finally dipped in ammonium chloride that blackens everything but the silver inlay, giving bidri its unique look.



**Chamba Rupal, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh:** The Chamba Rupal gets its name from Chamba, a hill-station in Himachal Pradesh, where the

craft has been practiced for centuries. The earliest records of the region dates back to 2nd century BC, making it one of the most ancient crafts in the state. The region is known for its history, architecture and landscapes but the local community is also known for its arts and crafts, in particular the miniature Pahari paintings.

The Pahari school of art has received royal patronage since the 17th century when it is believed to have originated in the region. Though miniature Pahari paintings are most commonly recognized, the term encompasses a variety of forms from murals to paintings. The impeccable needlework on the Chamba Rumals too is derived from this art movement, combining miniature art with embroidery.

**Pallava Stonecraft, Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu:** Distinctive-looking sculptures, characterized by their rounded form and exaggerated features are characteristic of temples built during the Pallava dynasty that ruled large swathes of southern India between 3rd and 9th century. Designs of the temples and the sculptures that adorned them eventually found their way across South-east Asia where they became a significant influence in shaping regional architecture. The Shore Temple in Mahabalipuram with its intricate sculptures has been accorded a UNESCO World Heri-



tage site. The craft from this area is also given a Geographical Indicator tag, recognizing its uniqueness and its origins in Mamallapuram, the earlier name of Mahabalipuram.

**Khurja Pottery, Uttar Pradesh:** The baked clay pottery is said to have travelled to India with Afghan King Taimur Lung as he passed through Khurja along with an expedition of potters from Egypt and Syria during an easterly campaign over 500 years ago.

Khurja pottery has characteristic exotic painted floral patterns, in soothing shades of blue and brown, on an off-white background, which gives it an elegance and ancient charm. A thick slip is used to raise some motifs in relief, creating a three dimensional visual feast. Over the years, the potters have also widened the array of colors to include warm orange and light red glazes, creating variety yet preserving the individuality of the art. This pottery is known for its beautiful patterns and timeless appeal.

Today, the art form has been kept alive by some 5,000 passionate artisans who work relentlessly in 500-odd units to produce these fine specimens of craftsmanship. Khurja in Bulandshaher is one of the earliest centers for glazed pottery in India where potters have the monopoly of making highly artistic blue pottery. These potters often call themselves as 'Multani Kumhars', suggesting that their origin was Multan.



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# Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, India @75



**ANIL TRIGUNAYAT**  
*India's former ambassador to Jordan, Libya and Malta. He takes keen interest in the Middle East and Africa, and Russia. He is a Distinguished Fellow of Vivekananda International Foundation and the president of Millennial India International Chamber Of Commerce Industry & Agriculture.*



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the Padyatra (Freedom March) from Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, on March 12, 2021, and inaugurated the curtainraiser activities of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (India@75)



An initiative of the Government of India to commemorate the 75th year of the country's Independence, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav in 2021, is an embodiment of all that is progressive about the nation's socio-cultural, political and economic identity.

In this article reproduced from 'India Perspectives', the flagship publication of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, former Indian Ambassador Anil Trigunayat writes about the various ways India has evolved to become a force to reckon with. A country is not merely a geography or group of people. It is a civilisational heritage. Modern India, drawing from the civilisational ethos of ancient Bharatvarsh, stands out among the comity of nations by virtue of its intellectual achievements, philosophical discourses and universalism in thought and action.

The past can be a good guide for an innovative future. Coming out of the colonial yoke, India enabled a large number of countries across Asia, Africa and elsewhere to follow suit and in turn, acquired the leadership through nonalignment to become the voice of the developing world. India's involvement in the United Nations (UN), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which later became the World Trade Organization (WTO) and a plethora of international organizations also engineered its adherence to multilateralism, which is also implicit in the psyche of Indians at a fundamental level.

At the time of its independence, India was struggling to survive hunger, poverty and under development, and yet it became a beacon of hope and trust for the world. India is an example of unity in diversity and has emerged as an indispensable strategic actor which needs to be factored into all global calculations.

India at 75 is a force to reckon with. With 1.3 billion voices, it can easily traverse the challenges that stare at her and the world. India's developmental model, which has evolved with time, has been of great assistance to more than 160 countries across the world through various capacity-building programs and efforts in the spirit of 'Share and Care'. It has helped India to create a tremendous constituency of goodwill across continents.



Even during the ensuing COVID-19 pandemic, India was one country which went way beyond her call of duty to help more than 150 countries with medicines and other assistance, and has provided millions of doses of vaccines to over 90 countries. 'Vaccine Maitri' and 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' became the mantra during this crisis. It was no wonder that when India faced the second wave of COVID-19 in mid-2021, many friends extended their assistance.

Global solidarity for confronting global challenges is what India practices and prescribes. India, with its continental size, is a kaleidoscope of culture, tradition, languages, art, music, films, food and festivities. These would be an integral part of the mahotsav (mega event) until August 2023 and beyond.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative to seek global support for the International Day of Yoga on June 21 at the UN in 2014 was an astounding and unprecedented success. It is gaining greater acceptability across the world. It was also a stellar achievement of Indian diplomacy. Other major initiatives like International Solar Alliance and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) have earned India the right to be at the forefront of fighting climate change.

As India aims to be the third-largest economy, led by talented youth into the Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven Industrial Revolution 4.0, it has embarked on a journey to become 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) and an integral part of the global value and supply chains with 'Vocal for Local' facilitating a paradigm shift in the post-Covid era. PM Modi has enthused the nation, saying that, "When an Indian takes one step forward, the nation sprints by 1.3 billion steps".

In the international domain, India is taking the lead as it chairs the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in 2021 and G20 in 2023, and aspires for its rightful place at the high table of UNSC (United Nations Security Council) as it promotes peace and development across the world through the dynamic five 'S' vision for foreign policy, namely Samman (respect), Samvaad (dialogue), Sahyog (cooperation), Shanti (peace) and Samridhi (global prosperity).

PM Modi, while speaking at the UN, said, "India is a nation that has given Buddha [in a reference to Lord Gautama Buddha] and not yuddh [war]. That is why we have an abiding commitment against terrorism. Terrorism goes against the founding principle of the United Nations, and for the sake of humanity, it is crucial that the world unites against it. A divided world is in nobody's interest." We can rightly be proud of our achievements in the last 75 years, although many challenges remain. But to rise to the dreams of our freedom fighters for a resurgent, resilient, robust and reliant India, we have to be innovative across the spectrum, while dedicating ourselves to the service of the nation.



On September 27, 2014, when PM Modi addressed the UNGA for the first time, he made his historic and successful proposal for the UN to declare June 21 every year as the International Day of Yoga

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# INDIA, SPICE BOWL OF THE WORLD

The use of spices in Indian cuisine is probably as old as the country. Besides lending distinct flavors and tantalizing aromas to Indian dishes, spices also increase the palatability, add characteristic coloring and many serve as a preservative in place of artificial colors or preservatives.

In addition to its ubiquitous use in Indian kitchens, spices have also been valued for ages in India for their medicinal, health promoting and rejuvenating properties. In recent years, extracts of Indian spices have found their way into pharmaceutical products, while their exotic aspect and aromatic nature have made them a vital ingredient in many cosmetics and perfumes.



Raja mircha

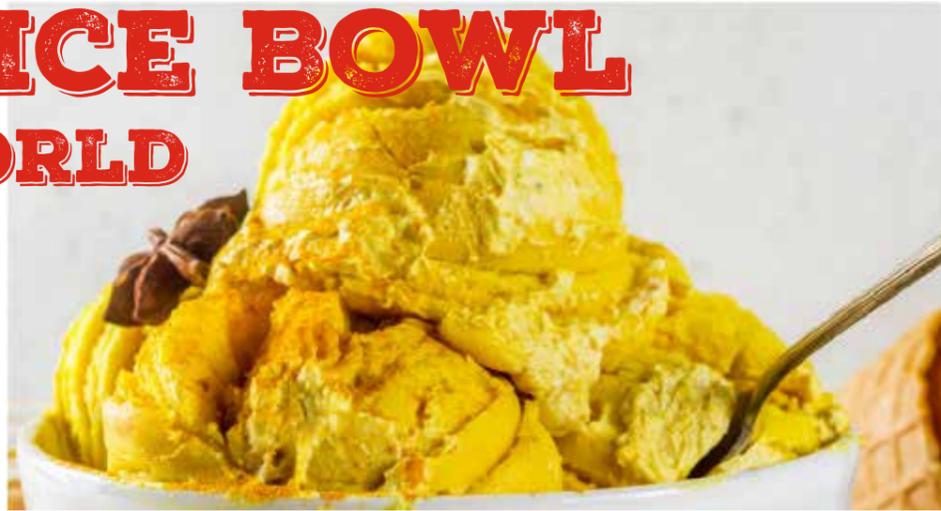
Some of the widely used spices in Indian cuisine include the 5Cs, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, coriander and cumin, as well as fenugreek, ginger, pepper and turmeric. Different parts of a plant are incorporated in Indian dishes to impart distinctive flavors, including from the root (ginger), bark (cinnamon), buds (cloves), seeds (cumin), berries (pepper), and flower (saffron).

Of the nearly 80 popular spices found around the world, more than 50 are grown and used in various parts of India. While many of these spices are common in most Indian households, there are also exotico varieties that are specific to certain regions of the country. In a recent issue of 'India Perspectives', the flagship magazine of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, the country's well-known celebrity chef, Sanjeev Kapoor, explores a few of India's lesser-known spices.

The article titled, 'India, the spice bowl of the world' notes that the country is popular for its myriad aspects, including its traditions, rich heritage and diverse culinary styles. People from outside the country are often extremely curious about the 'secret' ingredients used in Indian dishes that make them so uniquely flavourful. But what they generally tend to overlook is that it is the indigenous spices, which make Indian food so irresistible.

When we talk about spices, the one thing that is common in every Indian household is a masala dabba (spice box). A quintessential part of every desi Indian kitchen, masala dabbas are fascinating. And even though these spices are added in chutkis (pinches), they play a very big part in turning a dish from just palatable to simply delectable. Apart from the wonderful aroma and flavor, Indian spices also have medicinal and immunity-boosting properties.

For generations, Indians have traditionally used commonly-available kitchen ingredients to prepare healthy concoctions like kadha (a healing Ayurvedic drink made with herbs and spices) and haldi doodh (turmeric milk) to cure common cold. Popular spices such as jeera



(cumin), saunf (fennel), sarson (mustard) and methi (fenugreek) feature in masala dabbas across the country, and much has been said and written about their exceptional culinary properties. Therefore, here we explore some of the lesser-known indigenous spices from various parts of the nation, which will prove once again that India, truly is, the ultimate land of spices.

**Raja mircha:** Since we are talking about spices, let us begin with the ultra-spicy pepper or raja mircha, quite popular in the Northeastern part of India. Also known as ghost pepper, Naga chili and bhut (or bhoot) jolokia, it was recorded in the Guinness Book of Records as the hottest chili in the world in 2007. It is best when freshly plucked as it tends to lose its intensity with time. Another popular way of savoring this spice is by pickling it with oil, salt and vinegar. Nowadays, people are experimenting with it, which has led to the making of the bhut jolokia tea by an Assam-based tea company. When consumed in limited quantities, it is said to help in improving blood circulation and digestion, lowering blood pressure and boosting metabolism.

**Kalpasi:** Also known as daagar ka phool, pathar ke phool or black stone flower, kalpasi is the Tamil word for lichen. This special yet rare spice, which aids digestion, reduces inflammation and acts as a pain reliever, is primarily used in Maharashtrian and Cheinad cuisine (of Tamil Nadu). The upper surface of this spice is dark green or black in color. It has a strong earthy aroma and a dry texture, and is incorporated

in the preparation of such popular indigenous spice mixes as Maharashtra's kala masala and goda masala, and Hyderabad's potli masala.



**Lakadong and Salem Turmeric:** Turmeric or haldi is probably the most common Indian spice. It enjoys a pride of place in every desi household and deserves more appreciation than otherwise given. It is rich in curcumin, which has antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and immunity-boosting properties, and also imparts a beautiful yellow hue to every dish that it is added to. The two varieties of turmeric that are said to be the best in India are Lakadong from Meghalaya and Salem from Tamil Nadu. This humble superfood has traveled from traditional Indian kitchens to global food hotspots and has found a place in several international recipes like Morocco's pastilla (spiced meat and apricots wrapped in filo pastry), Sri Lanka's kiri hodi (dried Maldivian fish cooked in coconut milk gravy) and the extremely popular turmeric latte.

**Radhuni:** A spice that finds a special place in Bengali cuisine yet continues to remain obscure to the rest of the country, radhuni is often confused with ajwain (carom seeds) because of their similar appearance. Radhuni, seeds of wild celery, forms an integral part of the quintessential Bengali panch phoron — a traditional five-spice mix comprising kalo jeere (nigella), rai (mustard), mouri (fennel), methi and radhuni. This indigenous spice aids digestion, and helps reduce pain and inflammation.



**Ratan jot:** Alkanet root or ratan jot is a unique spice from north India, especially Jammu, Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. It is a herb that comes from the borage plant family and its roots produce a unique red color, which has made this spice so popular. The flavor is more earthy than spicy. Rogan josh, the classic Kashmiri meat dish, gets its rich red color from this spice. It has also been used as a medicine since ancient times for treating infections, skin wounds, rashes, burns and several other health problems. Perhaps, it is a precious 'ratan' or jewel after all.

**Kudam Puli:** Kudam puli or Malabar tamarind is a popular souring agent in South India and is often used as a substitute for the regular imli or tamarind. Its appearance is similar to kokum but it has a strong smoky flavor and is added to a variety of fish curries, which is why it is also called 'fish tamarind'. This spice is known to not only aid weight loss but also promote cardiovascular health and boost energy.



**Sanjeev Kapoor**  
A popular Indian celebrity chef, author and TV show host



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# Wildlife

## experiences across India

Indian attractions, both natural and man-made, have drawn visitors from the four-corners of the world for centuries. The abundance of spectacular ecological, topographic, climatic and geographic variations across the vast land, made even more attractive by the diversity of its people, their cultures, traditions and heritage, have endowed India with a timeless attractiveness that will continue to draw visitors for millennia to come.

Here we take a look at the country's rich diversity in wildlife, natural forests and sprawling parklands that make India a land ripe for exploration by tourists looking for adventure, unspoiled natural beauty and eco-friendly tourism.



**Bandhavgarh National Park, Madhya Pradesh:** A relatively smaller park, it nevertheless has the highest density of tigers in the country, in addition to a vast biodiversity and topography. The 2,000-year-old Bandhavgarh Fort inside the park stands testimony to the times when this used to be hunting grounds for the Rewa maharajas, and makes for an unforgettable backdrop to jungle safaris. Today, this National Park is a haven for animals and birds with over 250 species of birds, 37 species of mammals and 80 species of butterflies. The park also contains many rock paintings and man-made caves. Also not to miss are the White Tigers that reside in their natural habitat within this parkland.

enjoy nature than chase after animals. A place of stunning natural beauty, with misty mountains and silvery rivers, the higher reaches of the park (accessed by trekking) are home to the Himalayan brown bear, Himalayan tahr (wild goat), bharal (blue sheep) and other magnificent mountain animals. You can also spot birds like the Himalayan griffon vulture, the huge golden eagle and Himachal's state bird, the western tragopan.



**Jhalana Reserve Forest, Rajasthan:** The surprise of the season is definitely India's newest wildlife destination: the recently opened Jhalana Reserve Forest. Over 20 leopards have adopted Jhalana as their home over the past decade, leading the government to declare it a protected reserve and then, in May 2017, open the park up for guided jeep safaris. Plenty of birds like the shikra and white-eyed buzzard, and lots of peacocks, add beauty to the lush forest.



**Gir National Park, Gujarat:** Your only chance to see the Asiatic lion in the wilderness, not just in India but anywhere in the world, Gir has a special place in India's wildlife experience. Home to the majestic but endangered beast, this is also your chance to spot elusive animals like the panther, jackals, hyenas and porcupines. Known locally as Sasan Gir, spotting one of the lions against the grasslands of Gir is a truly unforgettable moment.



**Kaziranga National Park, Assam:** The only habitat of the endangered one-horned rhino, Kaziranga draws wildlife addicts from across the world for a glimpse of this massive beast. A beautiful park with tall grasslands, Kaziranga safaris are mostly on elephants rather than in vehicles. Because of its unique biodiversity, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985, and is also home to tigers, bears, panthers and elephants, along with hundreds of exotic birds.

**Great Himalayan National Park, Himachal Pradesh:** Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its outstanding biodiversity in 2014, this beautiful national park is more a space to



**Jim Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand:** The country's oldest national park, Corbett has always been a favorite weekend getaway from Delhi – and a popular destination for family holidays. Jim Corbett's forest is steeped in history and locals will tell you amusing tales about the legendary figure Carpet Sahib. The sightings of elephants, wild boars and tigers are fascinating. Take a safari or sit on the forest's edge, inside your luxury retreat, having a fine meal and enjoying the therapeutic sounds of the jungle.

**Manas National Park, Assam:** The second national park in Assam that is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Manas National Park is less frequented than the popular Kaziranga, which means it offers a more untouched wildlife experience. Its most famous resident is the





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pygmy hog, apart from other strange and wonderful creatures like the Assam roofed turtle and the golden langur. There is also the chance to spot a tiger.



**Panna National Park, Madhya Pradesh:**

When it comes to wildlife, Madhya Pradesh is blessed with some of the country's best parks boasting the highest chances of a tiger sighting. Another of its gems is the verdant Panna National Park, where you can spot the sloth bear, the sambar, nilgai and, if you are lucky, the tiger and the leopard. The surroundings make for a beautiful spot to enjoy a picnic breakfast and listen to the sounds of birds, such as the blossom-headed parakeet and changeable hawk-eagle.

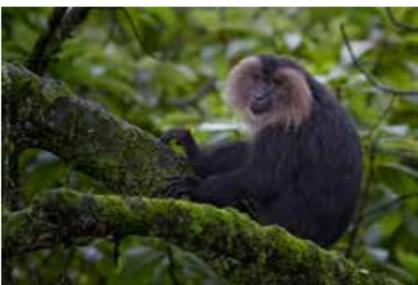


**Ranthambore National Park, Rajasthan:**

There is a good reason why this is the most popular (and the most crowded) national park in the country: fantastic tiger sightings. Ranthambore is more than just an opportunity to spot wildlife – one of India's prettiest parks, it is dotted with historical monuments and hunting lodges of the maharajas of yore, adding charm to the landscape. Spot scores of strikingly beautiful birds such as cormorants, lapwings and eagles.



**Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary, Goa:** Not all wildlife experiences are about the big cats. In Goa, this small sanctuary for birds on the island Choroa on Mandovi River is named after India's premier ornithologist, Dr Salim Moizuddin Ali. Make your way into the mangroves at this little wonderland in canoe-like boats over a channel of canals that lead through a paradise for bird lovers. Egrets, kingfishers, cormorants and drongos abound, and look out for rarer species such as the black bittern and the pied avocet.



**Silent Valley National Park, Kerala:**

Located in rainforest territory, Palakkad is as lush and beautiful as they come. Recently



named a UNESCO World Heritage Site (2012), it is part of the delicate Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, revered for its biodiversity. Spot tigers, leopards and elephants, and watch out for snakes and reptiles, as there are well over 400 species here.



**Sundarbans National Park, West Bengal:**

On the southern edge of West Bengal, facing the Bay of Bengal, is this unique part of the country: the world's largest river delta with mangroves and mudflats around a network of creeks and water channels. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site to protect its fragile ecosystem, the Sundarbans National Park is the largest reserve for the Royal Bengal tiger, apart from being ideal territory for spotting crocs, reptiles and a large variety of water fauna.



**Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra:**

A beautiful park that is still less known, Tadoba offers a chance to sight the dhole, or wild dog, which is often considered more difficult to spot than the tiger itself. There are also several elegant raptors, including the crested serpent eagle, gray-headed fishing eagle and the honey buzzard.



**Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary, Bihar:**

Lauded for its conservation efforts, the Vikramshila Sanctuary is in the Bhagalpur district of Bihar covers a 50km stretch of the Ganges. In 2009, the Gangetic dolphins were declared India's National Aquatic Animal, and this is a rare chance to spot them in large numbers.



**Kabini Forest Reserve, Karnataka:**

The biggest attraction at Kabini right now is its resident melanistic leopard, or the black panther that is spotted frequently during wildlife safaris into Nagarhole National Park. On the park's periphery, Kabini Reserve is the ideal place to stay for the region's best hotels and a whole host of wildlife experiences – such as boat safaris on the Kabini River, coracle rides and bird-watching walks.



**Periyar National Park, Kerala:**

For an experience that really differs from the wildlife parks of north and east India, head to the south, where the green is greener than any you have ever seen. Criss-crossed by the Periyar River, this evergreen forest is home to elephants and tigers, and creatures not seen in north India, such as the Malabar giant squirrel and Nilgiri langur. Locally called Thekaddy, this is a lovely hilly tract with nice trekking options – a wonderful way to see birds including the Nilgiri wood pigeon and laughing thrushes.



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# CURRY RECIPES

## TO SPICE UP DINING ON REPUBLIC DAY

This year why not celebrate the Republic Day of India with a 'curry fest' that presents some of the finest curries from different parts of the country. Curry, which has been native to Indian dining since ages, is an anglicized form of the Tamil word kari, which means sauce in most South Indian languages. Curry is basically a thick or thin sauce infused with flavorsome spices along with eggs, vegetables, fish, meat or chicken pieces.



### BUTTER CHICKEN

#### Ingredients

##### For the chicken

- 2.5cm piece ginger, peeled
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 green chili, destalked
- 2 tbsp thick natural yogurt or Greek yogurt
- 2 tsp chickpea flour (gram flour)
- 1 tsp mild paprika
- ½ tsp chili powder (or a little more if you'd like it spicy)
- ½ tsp garam masala powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- Pinch cinnamon powder
- Pinch saffron, crushed
- Salt to taste
- 450g skinless boneless chicken thighs, cut into bite-sized pieces
- Melted butter for basting
- 1 tsp chaat masala
- Juice of ½ a lemon
- Salad and chutney to serve

##### For the sauce

- 1½ tbsp unsalted butter
- 6 green cardamom pods, lightly crushed
- 2.5cm piece cinnamon
- 4 cloves
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 heaped tbsp grated ginger
- 2 green chilies, slit lengthwise
- 1 tsp kashmiri chili powder (or mild paprika)
- ½ tsp garam masala powder
- 3 tbsp tomato puree
- 150ml double cream
- 2 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp dried Kasoori methi (dried fenugreek leaf)
- 50ml water
- Salt to taste
- Chopped coriander for garnish

#### Directions:

##### Chicken preparation:

- Place the ginger, garlic and green chili in a wet grinder and blend to a smooth paste
- Mix yogurt with gram flour in a bowl to get a thick paste without any lumps
- Add the ginger, garlic and chili paste, the paprika, chili powder, garam masala and coriander powder. Also mix in the ground cinnamon, saffron and salt.
- Stir well and tip in the chicken pieces and mix to coat them in the thick marinade
- Leave to marinate for a few hours or even overnight if you prefer
- Soak wooden skewers in water. Preheat the grill to medium. Shake off the excess marinade and thread the chicken pieces onto the skewers and place them on a wire rack.
- Cook under the grill for 15-20 minutes. Turn the skewers every 5 minutes and baste with melted butter until the chicken juices run clear and the pieces are cooked through and slightly charred around the edges.
- Sauce preparation:
- Place a deep saucepan over a low heat and add the butter. When hot, add cardamom pods, cinnamon and cloves. Fry for 20 seconds, then add the onions and sauté for 5-7 minutes over a medium heat until they take on a light brown color
- Add grated ginger and chilies. Fry for a further minute, add the chili powder and garam masala, stir for 20 seconds and add the tomato puree. Mix well and cook for a couple of minutes
- Now gradually add the double cream, stirring continuously to mix it with all the spices. Simmer and cook for 2 minutes.
- Stir in the honey and the fenugreek. Season to taste. Add the water as well.
- Add the cooked chicken pieces and simmer the curry on a low heat for 6-8 minutes.
- Garnish with coriander and serve with naan bread.



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## MUGHLAI KARAHI GOSHT

### Ingredients:

1 kg leg of lamb on the bone, cut to bite-sized pieces  
5 garlic cloves, roughly chopped  
3.5cm piece ginger, roughly chopped  
4 tbsp vegetable oil  
500g tomato, thinly sliced  
200g onions, thinly sliced  
1 heaped tsp kashmiri chili powder (or mild paprika)  
Salt to taste  
2 tbsp Greek yogurt  
2 tsp coriander powder  
Pinch turmeric powder  
1 tsp cumin seeds, coarsely crushed  
½ tsp black pepper, coarsely crushed  
Pinch garam masala powder  
2 green chillies, slit lengthwise (optional)  
1 tbsp chopped coriander leaves  
1 tbsp chopped mint leaves  
ginger slivers for garnish

### Directions:

- Place the lamb in a mixing bowl. Crush the garlic and ginger to a coarse paste and add to the lamb. Stir well and set aside for an hour or overnight if you have time
- In a large heavy-bottomed saucepan, heat the oil on a medium heat. Add the marinated lamb chunks and fry for 5-6 minutes stirring well to seal



- Add the sliced tomatoes and cook for a further 8 minutes. The tomatoes will begin to break down and soften. Add the onions and chili powder and stir well, cooking for a further 3 minutes. Season to taste. Now lower the heat and simmer with the lid on for 30 minutes stirring half way through the cooking process
- Add the Greek yogurt to a small bowl and mix in the ground spices: coriander, turmeric, cumin and black pepper. Add to the karahi gosht and stir well, making sure the yogurt does not split.
- Continue simmering on a low heat with the lid half open, cook the lamb for 45-50 minutes, stirring half way through cooking, making sure it does not stick to the bottom of the pan.
- Turn the heat off and while it is still warm add the garam masala, chillies, coriander, mint and ginger slivers.

## GOAN PRAWN CURRY WITH COCONUT, CHILI AND CORIANDER

### Ingredients

- 400g raw king prawns, deveined, with tails on
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tbsp Goan vinegar or malt vinegar
- Pinch of salt
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 90g onion, finely chopped
- 80g tomato, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, pounded to a paste
- 2.5cm piece of fresh root ginger, pounded to a paste
- 400ml coconut milk
- 80ml water
- 1 tbsp tamarind paste
- 3 green chillies, slit lengthwise
- Pinch of sugar
- Salt to taste
- 1 tbsp chopped coriander leaves, to garnish

### For the powdered spices

- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 15-18 black peppercorns
- 1 tbsp coriander seeds



### Directions:

- In a bowl add the prawns and sprinkle over the turmeric powder, vinegar and salt. Mix and set aside for 15-20 minutes
- In a coffee grinder, tip in the cumin seeds, peppercorns and coriander seeds and grind to a fine powder. Set aside.
- Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan over a medium heat and add the onions and fry for 5-7 minutes until they start to change color to a light brown. Add the chopped tomato and fry for 5 minutes. As they begin to soften add the garlic and ginger paste and fry for a further minute.
- Now add the powdered spices and mix it all together. Fry for 2 minutes and add the marinated prawns. Stir, coating them in the spiced sauce for 20-30 seconds, then add the coconut milk, water and tamarind paste. Cover and simmer gently for no more than 4-5 minutes until the prawns turn pink. Add the green chillies and sugar.
- Garnish with coriander leaves and check seasoning. Serve with lime and coriander rice.



## SOUTH INDIAN EGG CURRY

### Directions:

- Mix the raita ingredients in a small bowl and put in the fridge.
- Finely grind the first five spices with a mortar and pestle, then add the mace, turmeric, chili flakes and cassia, and mix well. Dry-fry the almonds lightly over a medium heat. Set aside.
- Put the eggs in a pan of cold water, bring to the boil and simmer very gently for four minutes. Drain and refresh under cold running water for three minutes or so, then peel. Set aside on kitchen paper.
- Put a large heavy-based pan or flame-proof casserole over a medium heat, add the butter and heat for a moment. Add the onions and cook for a couple of minutes, then add the garlic and ginger, stir and cook until the onions are soft. Add the spice mix and 1 tsp salt, stir, then add the tomatoes. Simmer gently for a minute or so.
- Add the coconut milk, turn up the heat and bring to the boil. Allow to bubble gently for a minute before lowering the heat and simmering, uncovered, until the sauce has the consistency of double cream and coats the back of your stirring spoon with a glossy covering – 10 to 15 minutes.
- Turn off the heat. Halve the eggs, put them on to warmed dinner plates, spoon over lashings of the sauce, then sprinkle with the coriander and toasted almonds. Serve immediately with a dollop of the raita on the side.

### Ingredients:

#### For the raita:

- 200ml full-fat yogurt
- 100ml sour cream
- 2 tsp thick, black Indian tamarind paste
- 30g fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated
- Zest of 1 lime
- 1 small pinch finely ground cloves

#### For the curry:

- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 3 cloves
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- Seeds from 2 green

cardamom pods

- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- ½ tsp finely ground mace
- 1 tsp powdered turmeric
- 1 tsp chili flakes
- ½ tsp finely ground cassia
- 1 handful flaked almonds
- 6 eggs
- 60g unsalted butter, ghee or sunflower oil
- 300g onions, diced
- 3 fat garlic cloves, crushed
- 20g fresh ginger, grated
- 400g in chopped tomatoes
- 400ml coconut milk
- 1 handful coriander, leaves only

## HIRWA FISH KALWAN

### Ingredients:

- 800g firm white fish steaks with the center bone intact (cod would be ideal)
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 10 curry leaves, plus 5, roughly torn, to garnish
- 400ml coconut milk
- 2 tsp tamarind paste
- 1 red chili, halved lengthwise
- 1 tsp sugar

- 1 tbsp chopped coriander, to garnish

#### For the green paste

- 50g coriander leaves
- 50g coriander stalks
- 5 cloves garlic
- 2.5cm piece root ginger
- 1 green bird's-eye chili
- 2 spring onions, roughly chopped

#### Directions:

- Place the fish steaks on a plate and sprinkle over a pinch of salt and the turmeric powder. Rub this into the fish well and set aside while you make the paste.
- Mix all the ingredients for the paste in a mini



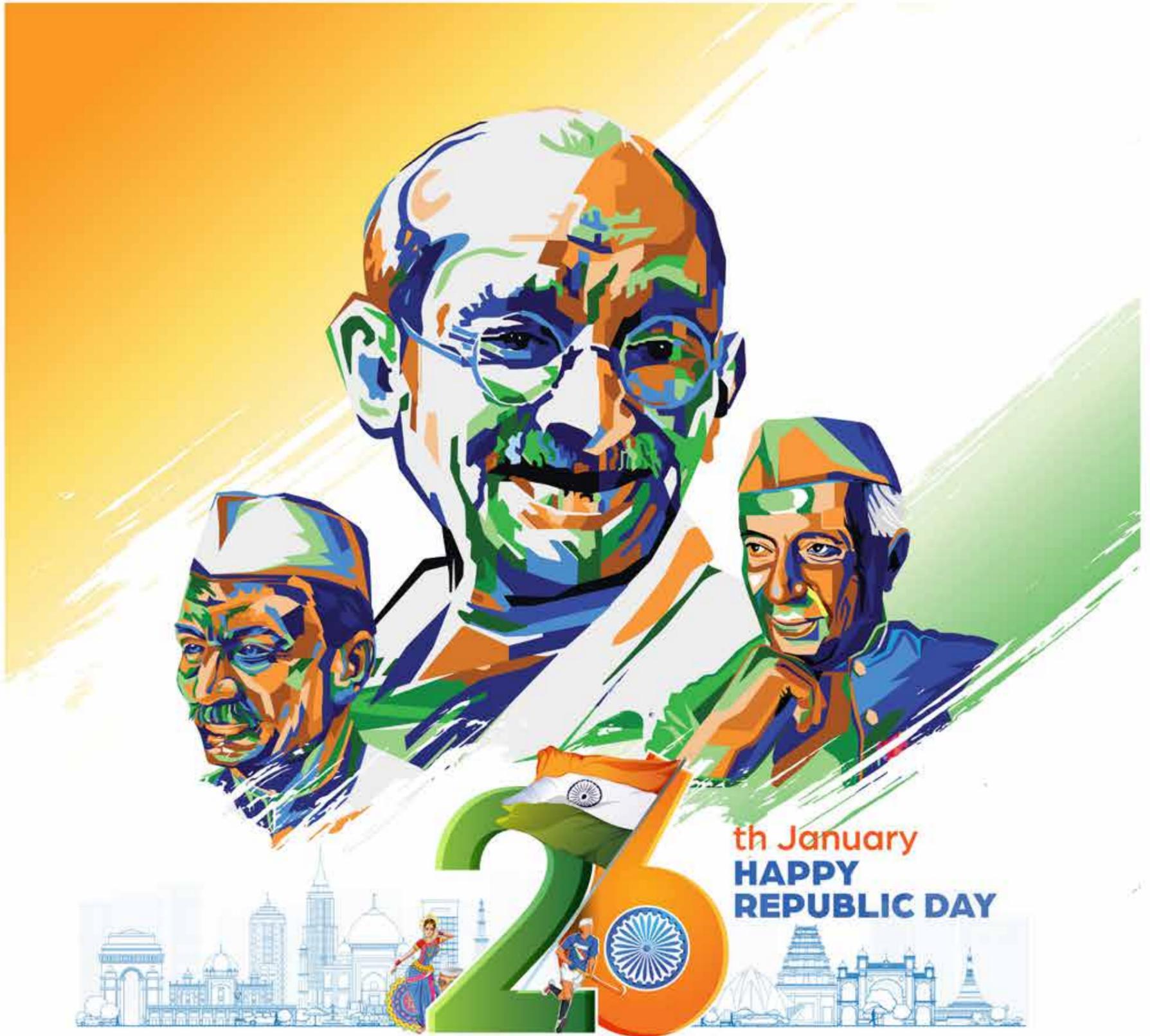
food processor and add 50ml water to form a smooth paste.

- Heat the oil in a saucepan and add the 10

whole curry leaves. When they begin to splutter add the paste and fry on a low flame for three to four minutes. Stir well and pour in the coconut milk, tamarind paste and 150ml water. Stir again and simmer for five minutes. Season to taste and add the sugar. Now add the fish steaks and, with the heat still on a low heat, cook the fish with the lid on for three to four minutes until just done. Halfway through the cooking process just lift the pan and swirl it gently to mix - do not stir.

- Garnish with chopped coriander and the remaining curry leaves. Turn the heat off and leave the curry to rest for 15 to 20 minutes. Serve warm with steamed rice.





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