

Independence Day of India

INDIA celebrates its Independence Day every year on August 15, commemorating independence from British rule on August 15, 1947. From that day until January 26, 1950, when it became a republic, India had dominion status with King George VI of England as the Head of State.

The Constitution of India was adopted on the November 26, 1949 and came into effect on the January 26, 1950. The year 2020 is witnessing celebrations on the completion of 70 years of the Constitution of India, in India and across the globe.

Independence Day, one of the three national holidays of India, is observed every year throughout India and diplomatic missions of India all over the world, with flag-hoisting, singing of national and patriotic songs, and reading of the president of India's address to the nation delivered on the eve of Independence Day. Indian diaspora joins the celebrations with the Indian diplomatic Missions.

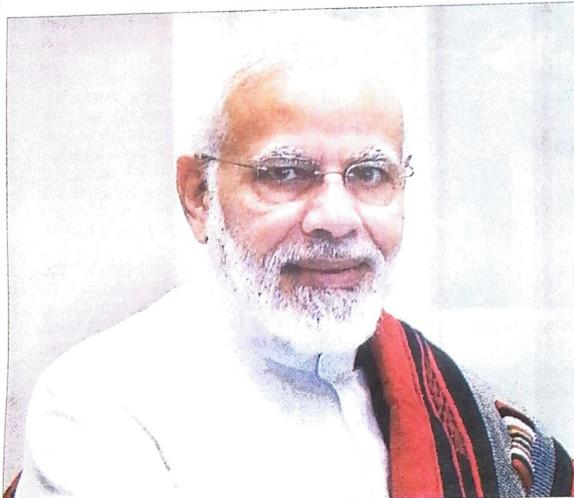
On Independence Day, prime minister of India hoists the Indian national flag from the ramparts of the historic Red Fort in the capital city of New Delhi and addresses the nation on previous year's achievements, raises important issues and shares views on and schemes for further development. Colourful cultural programmes and march past by veterans conclude the ceremony at the Red Fort.

The British rule in India began in 1757, when following their victory at the Battle of Plassey, the British East India Company began exercising control over India. East India Company's rule was replaced by direct British rule in 1857-58, in the wake of India's First War of Independence. The Independence Movement of India began during World

War-I, led by Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated for peaceful and non-violent end to British rule.

The country of India occupies the greater part of the South Asian continent. India is a Constitutional republic that represents a highly diverse population consisting of thousands of ethnic groups and hundreds of languages. With roughly one-sixth of the world's total population, India is the second most populous country in the world.

It is known from archeological evidence that a highly sophisticated urbanised culture - the Indus Valley Civilisation - dominated the north-western part of the subcontinent from about 2600 to 2000 BCE. From that period on, India functioned as a virtually self-contained political and cultural area, which gave rise to a distinctive tradition. Throughout centuries residents of the subcontinent developed a rich intellectual life in such fields as mathematics, astronomy, architecture, literature, mu-



The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi. (Google pic)

and fine arts.

Throughout history, India was intermittently disturbed by incursions from beyond its historic north-western frontier. Important was the coming of Islam brought in by Arab, Turkish, Persian and other raiders beginning early in the 8th century CE. Some of the raiders stayed and by the 13th century, much of the subcontinent was under Muslim rule, which only declined after the arrival of the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama, who came to the Indian shores in 1498. Subsequently European maritime supremacy was established in the region, culminating with the absorption of the subcontinent within the British Empire.

When British rule came to an end in 1947, the subcontinent was partitioned along into two separate countries, India and Pakistan. India remained within the commonwealth, English was retained as the lingua franca and Parliamentary system of governance continued.

India remains one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism account for the multi-ethnic society of the country. Earnest attempts have been made by successive governments to instill a spirit of nationhood in so varied a population. Social legislation has done much to alleviate the disabilities, previously suffered by the marginalised in the society.

INDIA UNDER PRIME MINISTER MODI

Under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, a new era of modern India is taking shape with a clear vision and decisive action on all important internal

and international matters. This has resulted in extraordinary changes for better in the lives of millions.

Massive infrastructure upgradation in the form of hundreds of thousands of kilometers of roads, eradication of poverty, connecting every households with electricity and cooking gas, achieving hundred percent washrooms in every household under Swachh Bharat Mission, access to internet in the farthest corners of India, extension of mobile banking facilities and Direct Benefit Transfers eradicating pilferage and middlemen and opening up of 300 million new bank accounts have drastically changed the lives of millions. Many international organisations and financial organisations have lauded the sweeping changes being brought under the able leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

The New Education Policy (NEP) announced very recently by the Government of India aims at eradicating the age-old teacher/institute-centric policies and instead, paves the way for student-centric education, laying more emphasis on what is needed by the student community rather than what the teacher/institute could offer.

INTERNATIONAL

Internationally, India is in the forefront of institutionalising International Solar Alliance (ISA). India now holds the Director Generalship of ISA and hosts the permanent Secretariat of ISA in the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Membership of ISA is now open to all member-Nations of the United Nations.

Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India has taken an active role in the emergence of a shared commitment to maintain and strengthen a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region.

India's leadership at various international fora on multilateral issues like response to Covid-19 pandemic is well-known. India has emerged as the leading supplier of not only pharmaceutical products but PPE during the pandemic and its timely response in ably handing the pandemic internally and the international assistance given to many African countries includ-

ing Eswatini, has been appreciated globally.

For the eighth time India has been elected as a non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council for the years 2021 and 2022 with the overwhelming support of 184 out of 192 members. India's work in the Security Council will be guided by the prime minister's call for a reformed multilateralism and the dynamic vision for foreign policy namely, respect, dialogue, cooperation, peace and to create conditions for universal prosperity.

Through this approach, India seeks to move towards a new orientation for a reformed multilateral system, which can be encapsulated as NORMS. Seeking responsible and inclusive solutions, concrete and result-oriented action at the Security Council for an effective response to international terrorism, reformed multilateralism to reflect contemporary realities, a comprehensive approach to peace and security, guided by dialogue, mutual respect, commitment to international law, to help streamline UN peacekeeping and technology with the human touch will be India's endeavour during its membership at the UNSC.

On our PM's proposal United Nations has declared 21st June as the International Day of Yoga (IDY) which is being celebrated all over the world since 2015. EmaSwati had very enthusiastically taken part in the celebration of the Virtual International Day of Yoga organized by the High Commission of India, Mbabane on June 21, 2020. We hope that everyone continues to adopt yoga to stay fit and combat COVID-19.

INDIA-AFRICA FORUM SUMMITS

India has so far held three India-Africa Forum Summits (IAFS) with Heads of State/Government from Africa. HM King Mswati III had attended the 2nd India Africa Forum Summit held at Addis Ababa in May 2011 and the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit in October 2015. Under IAFS-III, 5 000 ICCR scholarships, 500 Special Agricultural Scholarships and 1 000 post-Doctoral C.V. Raman Fellowships were offered during 2015-2020, which were well received and utilized by students, scientists and academicians from various countries across Africa. India Africa Forum Summit IV scheduled to be held in New Delhi in 2020 stands postponed due to the ongoing pandemic.

INDIA'S OUTREACH IN ESWATINI

In 2018, through a Cabinet Decision, India committed to open 18 new resident Diplomatic Missions across the Continent of Africa. As part of this commitment, High Commission of India, Mbabane was opened on August 13, 2019 and is now fully functional at UN House, Somkhlo Street, Mbabane. (www.hcim-babane.gov.in)

Senator Peter Bhembe, Minister of National Resources and Energy of the Kingdom of Eswatini led a three-member delegation to India in November 2019

and visited Kolkata and Ahmedabad to study iron and steel production units in India. As a follow up, the Steel Authority of India has agreed to conduct a feasibility study for iron ore beneficiation and setting up of a steel plant in Eswatini.

The Chief Defence Officer of the Kingdom of Eswatini HRH Prince Hlangusemphi Dlamini visited India on February 5-7 2020 to take part in the First India Africa Defence Ministers' Conclave and to witness the DEFEXPO held at Lucknow on February 5-6. He also visited various rural development schemes implemented by NABARD and was briefed on the capacity building training programmes available at Bankers Institute of Rural Development at Lucknow.

As part of emerging development partnership cooperation between India and Eswatini, several Lines of Credit for development assistance has been extended earlier by India to the Government of Eswatini which includes the US\$15 million for Food Security Programme, US\$ 20 million for construction of the Royal Science & Technology Park, US\$37.9 million for Agricultural Development and Mechanization Project. Further Lines of Credit of US\$ 108.28 million for construction of a new Parliament Building for Eswatini and US\$ 0.4 million for constructing a Disaster Recovery Centre for the National Data Center at Royal Science and Technology Park are in the pipeline.

A cash and kind grant of US\$1 million and 700 tons of rice and 300 tons of beans was made to NDMA in 2018, medical equipment worth US\$3 million was donated to the Ministry of Health the same year, in 2019-20 US\$400 000 was granted to the Irrigation Project in Maphalaleni in Hhohho region and essential medicines worth E3million to combat COVID-19 was donated to the Ministry of Health in July 2020.

Under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme, Eswatini is receiving 50 ITEC slots annually for advanced technical training which is being zealously utilised. During the training year 2019-20 about 32 emaSwati underwent training in diverse fields under this training programme.

Recently, a six-member team of rural women have graduated to become solar engineers by completing their training at the Barefoot College, Rajasthan. Earlier, five artisans from Eswatini participated for the first time at Surajkund Mela where they displayed crafts from Eswatini. Due to the ongoing Pandemic, the training courses are being organized this year through online webinars and live classes which are being availed regularly by EmaSwati. Academic scholarships for under graduate degree courses offered every year by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations are also being availed of by students from Eswatini on a regular basis.

The Resident High Commission of India in Mbabane will continue to work proactively to bring the two countries closer at all levels.

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