

HOLI 2024: DATE, HISTORY, SIGNIFICANCE AND CELEBRATIONS



Holi 2024, celebrated on March 25th, marks the victory of good over evil and the arrival of spring. As the vibrant festival of colors, Holi, approaches in 2024, excitement fills the air as people eagerly anticipate celebrating this joyous occasion with family and friends. Rooted in Hindu tradition, Holi is one of India's most cherished festivals, celebrated with exuberance and enthusiasm across the country.

Holi 2024 – Date and Timing

Holi, also known as the **Festival of Colors**, falls on **Monday, March 25, 2024**. The preceding day, **March 24, marks Holika Dahan**. According to **Drik Panchang**, auspicious timings for the festival are as follows:

- **Purnima Tithi Begins:** 09:54 AM on March 24, 2024
- **Purnima Tithi Ends:** 12:29 PM on March 25, 2024

Holi 2024 – Historical Significance

Holi carries profound historical and cultural significance, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil and the onset of spring. According to Hindu mythology, it commemorates the divine love shared between **Lord Krishna and Radha**. Legend has it that Lord Krishna playfully smeared colors on Radha's face, thus initiating the tradition of **applying colors during Holi**.

Another significant tale associated with Holi is the **story of King Hiranyakashipu, his son Prahlad**, and his demon aunt Holika. Prahlad's unwavering devotion to Lord Vishnu enraged Hiranyakashipu, leading him to conspire with **Holika to eliminate Prahlad**. However, divine intervention saw Holika perishing in the flames while Prahlad emerged unscathed, symbolizing the victory of righteousness over malevolence.

Significance of Holi 2024

Holi 2024 holds immense significance as it commemorates the **triumph of good over evil and the arrival of spring**. Rooted in **Hindu mythology**, it symbolizes the **divine love between Lord**

Krishna and Radha. Beyond its religious connotations, Holi fosters unity, harmony, and the renewal of relationships. It's a joyous occasion where people of all backgrounds come together to celebrate life, forgiveness, and the vibrant colors of the season.

How is Holi Celebrated?

Holi is celebrated with exuberance and joy across India, with special fervor in regions associated with Lord Krishna such as **Mathura, Vrindavan, and Barsana**. The festivities span over two days:

- **Holika Dahan:** On the eve of Holi, people gather to light bonfires, signifying the burning of evil forces. This ritual is a symbolic representation of triumphing over negativity and heralding the onset of positivity and goodness.
- **Rangwali Holi (Dhulandi):** The main day of Holi is marked by the playful smearing of vibrant colors, also known as gulal, on friends and family members. Water balloons, water guns, and other playful tools add to the joyous atmosphere as people revel in the spirit of camaraderie and laughter.
- **Traditional Customs:** Special sweets and drinks like thandai are prepared for the occasion, adding to the festive mood. Children engage in water-based games while adults exchange greetings and blessings.
- **Regional Variations:** Different regions in India have their unique customs and traditions associated with Holi. Phoolwali Holi in Vrindavan and Lathmar Holi in Barsana are renowned for their grandeur and cultural significance.

'SHIVA' AND 'SHAKTI,' EARLIEST BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE MILKY WAY

Context: Astronomers have discovered **two ancient streams of stars, named Shakti and Shiva**, which are among the **earliest building blocks of the Milky Way galaxy**.

- These streams, identified using data from the **European Space Agency's Gaia telescope**, are believed to have **merged with the Milky Way around 12 billion years ago**.

- Each structure contains stars with similar chemical compositions, **formed approximately 12-13 billion years ago and with a mass about 10 million times greater than our sun.**

Gaia, launched in 2013, has been instrumental in **mapping the Milky Way's three-dimensional structure**, aiding astronomers in detecting structures like Shakti and Shiva. Further studies, including future Gaia surveys, are expected to provide additional insights into the formation and evolution of the Milky Way galaxy.

In Hinduism, the **union between Shiva and Shakti gave rise to the cosmos.** Identifying the Shakti and Shiva structures has helped to bring the **Milky Way's turbulent earliest stages into focus.**

OPERATION INDRAVATI



Operation Indravati is an ongoing evacuation mission launched by the Indian government to rescue its nationals from Haiti, a Caribbean nation grappling with widespread gang violence and political instability. The operation, named after the Indravati River in India, aims to ensure the safety and well-being of Indian citizens amidst the escalating crisis in Haiti.

Background of the Crisis in Haiti

Haiti has been plagued by gang violence and political turmoil since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021. The power vacuum that followed led to the assumption of power by Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who has been supported by several nations. However, attempts to establish a political transition have failed, and various armed groups have launched coordinated attacks on key installations in an effort to force Henry's resignation.

THE BHASHANET PORTAL



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



The BhashaNet portal, a joint initiative by the National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), was unveiled at the Universal Acceptance (UA) Day event on March 21, 2024. This launch marks a significant step towards promoting digital inclusion and linguistic diversity in India.

What is Universal Acceptance?

Universal Acceptance (UA) is a concept that aims to ensure that all domain names and email addresses, regardless of language or script, can be used by all internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems. The goal of UA is to create a more inclusive digital world where individuals can fully participate without facing linguistic barriers.

The Importance of BhashaNet Portal

The BhashaNet portal is designed to support the cause of Universal Acceptance by providing resources, tools, and information to help developers, businesses, and organizations make their applications and systems UA-compliant. By promoting the adoption of UA, the portal aims to bridge the digital divide and ensure that everyone, irrespective of their language or script, can access and benefit from digital services.

Key Features of BhashaNet Portal

Multilingual Support: The portal will provide resources and information in multiple Indian languages, making it accessible to a wider audience.

CHINA'S LUNAR EXPLORATION PROGRAMME



China's lunar exploration programme is a series of ongoing robotic Moon missions by the China National Space Administration (CNSA). The programme incorporates lunar orbiters, landers, rovers and sample return spacecraft, launched using Long March rockets. It aims to study the Moon's surface, geology, and environment, as well as to demonstrate and develop new technologies for space exploration.

Queqiao-2 Satellite

On March 21, 2024, China launched the Queqiao-2 satellite, named after a mythological bridge made of magpies, as part of its lunar exploration programme. The satellite, weighing 1.2 metric tons, was carried by a Long March 8 rocket from the southern island province of Hainan. Queqiao-2 will act as a communications bridge between ground operations on Earth and upcoming missions on the far side of the moon.

Relay Function

Due to the Moon's rotation, its far side always faces away from Earth, making direct communication impossible. Queqiao-2 will orbit the Moon and relay signals to and from the Chang'e-6 mission, expected to launch in May. The satellite will also support the Chang'e-7 lunar mission in 2026 and the Chang'e-8 mission in 2028.

Future Constellation

By 2040, Queqiao-2 will be part of a constellation of relay satellites serving as a communications bridge for crewed lunar missions and exploration on other planets like Mars and Venus. The constellation will also provide communications, navigation, and remote sensing support for China's planned research station at the Moon's south pole.

Orbit

Queqiao-2 is expected to enter a highly elliptical orbit that passes close to the Moon's south pole, reaching as high as 8,600 km above its surface and enabling a communication link between Earth and the Moon for more than eight hours. For the remainder of its roughly 12-hour orbit, Queqiao-2 will be as low as 300 km above the lunar surface.

Tiandu-1 and Tiandu-2 Miniature Satellites

Alongside Queqiao-2, China launched two miniature satellites, Tiandu-1 and Tiandu-2. These satellites will conduct tests for the construction of the planned constellation.

Chang'e-6 Mission

The robotic Chang'e-6 mission, scheduled for launch in May, will seek to retrieve samples from an ancient basin on the far side of the Moon. This will be the first time lunar material has been acquired from the Moon's hidden side.

Queqiao-1 Satellite

Queqiao-2 will take over from the ageing Queqiao-1 satellite, launched in 2018. Queqiao-1, a third as massive as Queqiao-2, was the first relay satellite deployed to the far side of the moon, supporting the Chang'e-4 mission. Despite a designed lifespan of five years, Queqiao-1 is still operating and orbits a point in space about 70,000 km beyond the moon.

Chang'e-4 Mission and Yutu-2 Rover

In 2019, the Chang'e-4 mission made history by becoming the first spacecraft to perform a soft landing on the far side of the moon. It successfully delivered the robotic rover Yutu-2, or Jade Rabbit in Chinese, to the surface. Yutu-2 is still in operation, exploring the lunar landscape.

Future Plans

China's lunar exploration programme is expected to continue with crewed missions to the Moon's surface by 2030. The planned research outpost at the Moon's south pole will further advance scientific understanding and technological capabilities related to lunar exploration.

[ELECTION COMMISSION LAUNCHES SAKSHAM APP TO FACILITATE EASIER VOTING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND TO AVAIL FACILITIES AT POLLING STATIONS](#)

- The Election Commission has launched the Saksham App to facilitate easier voting for Persons with Disabilities and to avail facilities at Polling Stations.
- The Election Commission has always focused on Accessible Voting every time as it has the motto of no voter is left behind.
- The Election Commission has announced that voters above 85 years of age and Persons with Disabilities with 40 percent benchmark disability can vote from home.
- Volunteers and wheelchairs will be available at every polling station.

Key Highlights

- The poll body also arranges transport facilities for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly.
- The Commission has launched the **Saksham App** to facilitate easier voting for Persons with Disabilities and to avail facilities at Polling Stations.
- It is also pushing for permanent Assured Minimum Facilities AMF in schools as a gift of election process to the students. Assured Minimum Facilities consist of Drinking Water, Toilets, Signage, a Ramp or Wheelchair, Helpdesk, Voter Facilitation Centre, Sufficient Light and Shed.
- There will also be Polling Stations managed by Persons with Disabilities, Polling Stations exclusively managed by women and Model Polling Stations.

TAMIL NADU'S 18TH WILDLIFE SANCTUARY OPENS IN ERODE

The government of Tamil Nadu has decided to declare Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary as the 18th wildlife sanctuary in the state.



The government of Tamil Nadu has decided to declare **Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary** as the **18th wildlife sanctuary in the state**. This sanctuary covers an area of 80,567 hectares in the forest regions of Anthiyur and Gobichettipalayam taluks in Erode district, and includes reserve forest areas in Anthiyur, Bargur, Thattakarai, and Chennampatti. It is home to a variety of wild animals such as tigers, elephants, leopards, wild boars, gaurs, and deer. This wildlife sanctuary is located in close proximity to other sanctuaries such as Malai Mahadeshwara wildlife sanctuary, BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, Cauvery wildlife sanctuary in Karnataka, and it serves as a connecting point between Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve and Cauvery South Wildlife Sanctuary. This announcement was made during the state budget.

The newly designated wildlife sanctuary will facilitate the appointment of additional anti-poaching watchers and camps. Efforts will also be made to remove invasive species, mitigate conflicts between humans and animals, and promote the conservation of Asian elephants. Forest

department officials have assured the tribal communities residing in the sanctuary’s vicinity that they will not face any limitations while carrying out their work in the area. Rajkumar, a spokesperson for the officials, clarified that the tribal people living in six settlements have already received titles and will continue to enjoy their rights under the Forest Rights Act.

Important takeaways for all competitive exams:

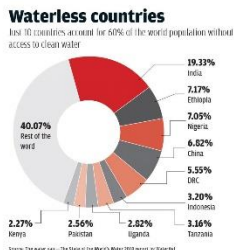
- Tamil Nadu Chief minister: M. K. Stalin;
- Tamil Nadu Capital: Chennai;
- Tamil Nadu Governor: R. N. Ravi.

26 % OF WORLD’S POPULATION DOES NOT HAVE SAFE DRINKING WATER: UNESCO REPORT

A report presented by UNESCO at the UN 2023 Water Conference reveals that 26% of the global population lacks safe drinking water, while 46% do not have access to well-managed sanitation facilities.



A report presented by UNESCO at the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York reveals that a significant portion of the world’s population still does not have access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. The report indicates that 26% of the **global population** lacks safe drinking water, while 46% do not have access to well-managed sanitation facilities.



About the UN 2023 Water Conference:

It will be the second UN Conference dedicated to water after the one held in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in 1977. UN has launched a global campaign called ‘Be the Change’ to mark World Water Day 2023.

The Report: UN World Water Development Report 2023:

The WWDR is published by UNESCO on behalf of UN-Water and its production is coordinated by the UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme. It is an annual report released on Launched on World Water Day (22nd March) every year.

The report's principal discoveries:

Global Findings:

According to statistics, a significant portion of the world's population, specifically two billion individuals, lack access to safe drinking water, and 3.6 billion people do not have access to well-managed sanitation facilities.

It is projected that by 2050, nearly half of the **world's urban population** will face water scarcity, up from one-third in 2016. **India** is expected to be one of the most severely affected countries in this regard.



South Asia:

80% of people living under water stress lived in Asia; in particular, northeast China, as well as India and Pakistan.
