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ANNUS MIRABILIS 2024

The people who settled along the River Nile invented a calendar which is used even today. The Nile is one of the longest rivers in the world. Egypt is a hot and dry desert. The Nile that flows right through Egypt used to flood Egypt every year. The flood water left behind a thick soil called silt which was good for growing crops. People settled along the Nile more than 7,500 years ago. They made a calendar based on the Nile's yearly flood pattern to keep track of when they should plant crops. The calendar had a year of 365 days divided into 12 months and three seasons. This calendar brought prosperity to Egypt and it turned out to be a very powerful civilization. Later as and when a calendar was adopted by other civilizations they too prospered. And that was the magic of a calendar.

Transporting from 2023 to 24

Kamlesh Tripathi ponders over the events of 2023 and its carryover to '24 by examining the many happenings that are to unfold, beaming with hope for better times.

plus seats in the Parliament or will be less than a full-fledged majority. Narendra Modi will most certainly return as PM but his challenges in 2024 will be more rigorous than in 2023, especially in the field of foreign affairs and the glide of the economy.

The adverse global factors would be the ongoing wars that will impact us negatively. Though the **Russian-Ukraine war** is heading for a stalemate. The **Israel-Hamas war** continues to rage the world. It will be a tightrope walk for the government to steer India through the

results would impact the global standing of India. As of now we could do with our fingers crossed and watch the emerging situation. India has learnt to live with both the Republicans and the Democrats in the US with equal ease and discomfort in the past. A Labour Party victory in the UK



could jeopardise or delay the prospects of a free trade agreement like the bullock-cart journey of Lord Babington Macaulay from Madras port to Ooty in the 19th century. But then FTA is not a big game changer.

The country is poised to grow by 7% in the **current fiscal 2023-24**. 2024-25 should be equally good unless the US and Europe slide into a deep recession. Internally, our economy is almost at ease, especially, because state spending tends to be high in election years. We have not only the Lok Sabha elections ahead of us but also state assembly elections in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, with Maharashtra, Haryana and Jharkhand (Jharkhand in January 2025) to follow later in the year.

The most awaited event of the century, rather centuries, comes alive in 2024 which is the inauguration of Ayodhya Ram Mandir on January 22. It not only has a religious and political significance but also economic. After the temple's consecration, there will be a huge spurt in pilgrimage to Ayodhya and Varanasi.

Jammu & Kashmir's elections are slotted for 2024, but the big point here will be the restoration of this UT's statehood before September 30, as stipulated by the SC bench that validated the nullification of Article 370.

Northeast India is 9% of India's



Today, every event and episode happening on this planet is recorded in a calendar: So welcome to the calendar of 2024. The year 2023 witnessed two deadly wars: The continuance of the Russia-Ukraine war and the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war when the world had just about recovered from the ghastly impact of COVID-19.

The Chinese monastic teacher in his book '365 Days for Travellers' says 'Oh great, compassionate Buddha! At the beginning of the new year, I will look upon Everything in the past as a yesterday that has passed away, Everything in the future as a present that is newly born'. Each New Year springs up new hopes, and each coming year throws up new goals, where you roll back old scrolls, to live in with your new roles. The new year betters the best that has gone by.

2023 has been a good year for our country. 2024 is expected to be better—Annus Mirabilis. But yes, watch out, because a recession in the West, or a West Asia conflict may spoil the party.

The challenge of global warming won't be lenient on India. Erratic weather patterns and air pollution will continue to be a matter of great concern. It is already affecting human health, wildlife, food production, clean water access and the economy at large. Home to nearly 18% of the world's population, the country is looking to transform its fast-growing infrastructure and energy systems to reduce heat-trapping emissions on a massive scale.

What can we expect politically and economically?

Should India be looking at 2024 with hope or apprehension is the big question? To me, it would be a sort of mixed bag. Even if the micro factors are encouraging there would always be the global (macro) factors that could be detrimental to India. The Modi Government appears to be returning to power in the 2024 general elections. The question is whether the BJP will win 272

dark alleys of these wars. If both wars end with quick negotiations, the world will be a better place to be in. Maritime safety would be the new emerging challenge. In addition, the sword of China's salami slicing and incursions still hangs over India.

For GenZ, Bard's long-standing idiom 'the world is your oyster' will continue to adorn the environment with myriads of global openings and jobs in the new sectors, barring the AI that threatens to take away jobs. Industrial production is likely to be up. Start-ups and SMEs would be the major job providers.

Our neighbours, both Bangladesh and Pakistan are poised for elections in January and February 2024. It wouldn't matter who wins in Pakistan as nothing much will change. However, if Bangladesh has a change of government (ouster of Sheikh Hasina) it could make things tougher for India, since the next regime

could be friendlier to China, just like the Maldives. Elections are also due in the two major anglosphere countries: The USA and the UK towards the end of the year. The

Scotland of the East. There are over 220 languages spoken in the whole of North East and it's laden with a huge mix of cultural diversity and this can become a big tourist attraction. The Rhinos are the pride of India.

It would be a grand idea if all the seven sisters could come together and form a circuit tour of Northeast. You land in Guwahati and take off from there and in between the tourists should be taken to all the seven states on a guided tour. The beauty of the Northeast can give jitters to Switzerland and Scotland. But how long will it take for the Northeast to wake up to this amazing fact?

One hopes the Indian **film industry** will continue to give its viewers big hits. On the sporting front, the cricket World Cup T20 matches will be co-hosted by the US and West Indies in June 2024, where hopefully our men in blue will not impress only to disappoint in the end, as they did in the ODI World Cup in 2023. This event will be preceded by Women and Men's IPL in the March-May period in India. Neeraj Chopra again won the gold in javelin in the World Finals in Budapest and India won 107 medals between 23



September and 8 October in the 19th Asian Games, held in Hangzhou, China.

The **Union budget** for 2024-25 will be presented on February 1. While this is expected to be a plain vote-on-account, one should not be surprised if the Modi government slips in a couple of pre-election announcements.

showcased in a much more professional manner. Study the African wild sighting models.

Stepping into '24, and deliberating over cannot get past without Manipur. The mayhem in Manipur has been extremely heartbreaking. It now has a Wikipedia page too, titled, '2023 Manipur Violence' which is reflective of a sad state of affairs. What brought about this violence between the two communities is a matter of deep introspection. The idea is not to suppress the violence but to get the communities together once again. Northeast India is a gifted place. It is the Land of Sunrise—the first ray of sun falls on Arunachal Pradesh. It has the world's largest river island in Majuli in Assam. It has the cleanest village in Asia; Mawlynnong and the wettest place in the



The much-delayed Census is vital for implementing not only the delimitation of constituencies but also giving effect to the 33% women's reservation bill already passed by the Parliament. If the Census begins this year, we will get the results only by 2025 – cutting it fine for the expansion of the Lok Sabha seats by 2029.

The **Gaganyaan project** will see many test launches during the year. If successful, they will set the stage for India's first manned space mission. 2024 is the year in which India can truly aim for the skies on all fronts if things go right. And last but



geographical area and contributes 3% to the country's GDP. In relative terms, it is one of India's economically laggard regions. It therefore needs to go full throttle as far as the economy is concerned. The Northeast also has abundant wildlife and this should be

world Mawsynram in Meghalaya. Assam's Digboi is home to the oldest operational oil well in the country, and also home to the first modern oil refinery. The largest tea-growing region in the world is in Assam. It is among the most literate states of India. Meghalaya is considered the

not least we wish for a normal monsoon for our food security and rural economy. New Year storms in with a lot of hope; but the despair of the previous year doesn't pack off so easily. I guess they both go hand-in-hand. So, learn to live with both for some time.