

## Decline in Share of Coal Import

There has been a reduction in the share of coal import in the total coal consumption in the country. The share of coal import declined to 21% during April 2023 to January 2024, which was 22.48% during the corresponding period of previous year. There has been a reduction of 36.69% in the volume of coal imported for blending by thermal power plants, amounting to 19.36 million tons (MT) during April 2023 to January 2024, in contrast to the same period of the previous year. This reduction in imported coal for blending signifies a shift towards utilizing domestic coal, thus reducing reliance on imports. Conversely, there has been a notable increase of 94.21% in coal imports by imported coal-based power plants during April 2023 to January 2024, compared to the corresponding period in the previous year. As these power plants are designed based on imported coal only, the growth can be attributed to a substantial decline in import prices of coal during the aforementioned period. India primarily imports thermal coal from South Africa and Indonesia, and average prices from these countries decreased by approximately 54% and 38% respectively during April 2023 to January 2024, compared to the corresponding period in the previous year. Furthermore, there has been a substantial reduction in the auction premium received by CIL, over the notified price of coal. It has decreased from 278% in the period from April 2022 to January 2023, to 82% during the same period in the fiscal year 2023-24.

## Preserving Mansar and Surinsar Lakes

■ G.L. KHAJURIA

Fringed by lush green vibrant forest covered hills, Mansar and Surinsar are most majestic lakes in Jammu & Kashmir State. The lakes are the prime attraction of Jammu region and are conveniently approachable from Samba as well as from Jammu through regular buses and private convenience around the year. These spots are of ample importance apart from being lakes alets. These constitute as the big water bodies amidst the hills with beautiful locations. The twin lakes harbour a rich variety of marine wildlife comprising endangered flap shell turtles and other multi-lined marine lives within the water body of these lakes. These are also prime destinations for the winged visitors who flock over here from far away places for seasonal change and breeding. The lakes are existing at an elevation of around 670 meters (2000ft) from mean sea level (MSL). And occupy their own placement of enchanting prominence of Jammu's duggar land. On the Lower Shivalik of outer Himalayas these form an important tourists destination as well. It is prominently believed that these twin lakes share their sanctity of lake Mansarovar located amidst the pride Himalayas. According to Jalnuni Muni, who explains in the revered granth Sree Jalmani yashamedh that these composite lakes were created during Mahabharata when a war was waged by Arjuna's son Vabruvahan. Both these lakes are an epicenter of Dogra culture as the word Dogra has originated from Sanskrit word Devigrat meaning between two thoughts. As such, it is believed that Dogras are an Indo-Aryan tribe that originated between Mansar and Surinsar lakes. Presently, both these lakes form the social and cultural importance of Jammu region and more so due to a cluster of temples around the lakes of all temples, the most prominent being the main shrine on the eastern bank of Mansar lake famously called as Sheshnag Mythologically, Sheshnag is a Snake God with six heads. The shehnag temple and his image is within the temple. There are other prominent temples of Umapati Mahadev and Narsimha. There is a temple of Maa Durga on the bank of Mansar lake. The people who through over there from far flung areas takes a holy dip in the lake on all festive occasions. The newly wedded couples consider auspicious to have three circumambulation of the lake. Some communities however perform mundane ceremony (first hair cut) of the male children which is considered most auspicious. Amongst many dogra families, Shehnag is revered as Kuldevta and their traditional rituals are performed over here. Mansar is also famous for Alexandrian Darakeet which is local parlance is spoken as 'Mansariya' or 'Rai Tota'. This parrot is considered as a boon. It is so called because Alexander the great had taken to Greek and from that time it is recorded as first export of wild bird from Mansar. Some suggestions: Since both these lakes are situated in Shivaliks of Jammu region, lying in the outer Himalayas. The soil conditions and the forest cover keep the ecosystem well in place. Despite all that the area over the years has under gone drastic changes. Amongst a multitude factor. Deforestation is the major factor. the pristine grandeur, Glory and purity had undergone sea change. So in order to bring back to its originality some innovative and concrete measure shall have to put in place in order to protect, preserve and conserve the natural heritage of our region. The following points in sight are:-

► Soil Conservation measures: before we go ahead in carrying out any activity, soil conservation measures are of utmost importance. A series of comprehensive measures are warranted to be taken by the soil conservation department.

► Foreclosing the area: The areas need to be fenced by laying out fence line preferably with barbed wire and PCC posts. This shall be prehand treatment for the cover. Once the area is well protected, Subsidiary operations shall be carried out in subsequent stages.

► Plugging rills and gullies shall be our next target. cheet dams as and where are demanding shall have to be constructed. This way the soil shall be conserved and obviously the drainage system shall be boosted.

All the filth conglomerated with eroded soil/ boulders which drains down into the lake shall be averted and silation shall be kept at bay.

► Subsequently, with the onset of Monsoon plantation operation of such species as sauntha (Dedonia Vescosia) need to be introduced along with other local species e.g. Acaacia, Cassia, Syzygium cumin etc. Kutzoo vine is very good soil binding species and its inculcation shall go a long way in conserving the soil.

Ipomia cutting along fence line shall re-inforce the fence line and shall strengthen the fencing of the area. Cactus along fence line at places yield successful results and their introduction shall be a boon for life long protection and strengthening of the fore-closed area as a whole.

► Introduction of medicinal, aromatic trees which will be the clarion call of the day.

Our revered Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti is very much enthusiastic in preserving and promoting Lakes, wetlands and other wetlands throughout the length and breadth of the state. If wular and dal lakes in the vale of Kashmir, are presented Mansar, Surinsar don't deserve their due share for development part apart from other wetland and water bodies sprawling over Jammu Leh, and Ladakh which constitute an equally important component of our heritage.

It has often been observed that there are ever escalating hue and cry amongst jammunites and developmental front, in the vision of the Chief Minister and the environment ministers. These developments should at no cost should become lop-sided and sreas apart from vale of Kashmir are not being deprived of their due share of development. The media have most frequently been highlighting the issues of Jammu, leh and Ladakh which has always been shelved in the silent box. It is therefore, urging upon the government under whose the administrative and executive authorities are very alive. These should act upon judiciously for all the regions so that we can be proud of equality and transparency which beyond facts is the fundamental right enunciated in the constitution of state as well that of India. Shri narendra Modi has always been a symbol of justice and stood unbiased. Conclusively on therefore, it is added over here that our state being the crown of India is as well tourism top, socially strong and finally a treasure trove perhaps any state in our sub continent have has it. We are proud of our majestic Mansar and Surinsar.

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■ ID SONI

Sometimes, we allow ourselves to be trapped by our routine, outer life. We allow ourselves to fall into a rut of our own making, and think that we cannot get out. We are trapped in the vicious cycle of acquisition, buying bigger homes, getting bigger cars, taking more bank loans and credit card loans, calculating our lives and earnings in down payments and installments. If the neighbour takes a holiday abroad, we feel small until we have equalled his 'record'. "This is our life", we think; or, "This is our job..... we have to think of our promotions, we have to climb to the top, there is no escape, from this for us..... we are stuck with it..... we have no options. We become tired, depressed and cease to pay attention to our own feelings and inner aspirations. We are not listening to our hearts.

Occasionally at least, we must stop to ask ourselves: Is this what we want out of our life? Are we equating our life with our possessions and acquisitions? Are these acquisitions adding to our sense of self-worth? Are they making us really happy? The demands and distractions of modern life only take us away from ourselves. This is why Indian philosophy and culture insist on to learn from our festivals whereby we can discover the divine within ourselves.

The great Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen said, "Money can buy the husk of things, but not the kernel. It brings us food, but not appetites medicine but not health, acquaintances but not friends, servants but not faithfulness, days of pleasure but not peace or happiness.

"Man does not live by bread alone!" Ruskin wrote. Making money, accumulating possessions can never lead to a fulfilling life. Of course, it is good to have some of the luxuries that money can buy-but we would be the loser if we miss out all the wonderful things that money cannot buy!

"The more a man finds his sources of pleasure in himself, the happier he will be", writes the philosophers Schopenhauer. "The highest, the most varied and lasting pleasures are those of the mind....."

Truely, if we cannot find our sense of self-worth, our true happiness and contentment within, it is useless to seek it elsewhere. It, therefore, becomes, on our part imperative to do what we love- find joy in activities that appeal to our heart, and not merely to our head. The festivals in India help us to exercise our soul! Turn to nature to nurture us.

Such one is the "Holi" festival. It is cele-

brated in different parts of india in honour of spring. Withthe return of spring of this festival is observed every year. Again and again that an influence flows on us, a fragrance emanates from trees and stones, from streams and stars- on the "Holidays". That day a new life moves on this ancient earth: The southern breeze blows beautifully, and the birds sing their new songs of hope and love. Verily, the "Holi" marks a new turn in the cycle of seasons: and there is a joy that day in Hindu homes.

On that day was born a prophet of love- Sri Chaitanya. He was born in Nadia- still a seat of Sanskrit learning. Like Guru Nanak and Saint Kabir, Sri Chaitanya bore witness to Divine Love and out of him moved out influences which shaped the deeper life of Bengal and Orissa, of Bihar, Assam and the Deccan.

Sri Chaitanya in Bengal and Sankara Dev in Assam taught the cult of bhakti or devotion to Krishna and Radha. Sankara Dev's Vaishnava movement, like Sri Chaitanya's, was a protest against intellectualism and ceremonialism. Both Sri Chaitanya and Sankara Dev had a simple ceremonial consisting of devotion, hymns and prayers.

The message of Sri Chaitanya and Sri Sankara Dev is, also, the message of Holi: it is the message of Divine Love- Love for God and love for man. Both, Chaitanya and Sankara Dev rediscovered Krishna and Brindaban. Krishna was love incarnate and Brindaban was the shrine of love. The message of the Holi calls us to new life of love. Without it the world would belong to armed brutes. Under the influence of Chaitanya, processions of men moved through the streets, singing the Name of God, with flags flying and drums beating. Chaitanya called the processions, Nagar-kirtan, praising the Name in processions moving through the town. What a joy filled their hearts as they sang the Name! They would sit together for hours, singing the Name of God with musical instruments.

The Kirtan, the hymns, the teaching of Chaitanya movements, "die to self and win new life, influenced the poetry of India's beloved poet Shri Rabindra Nath Tagore, and the thought and life of India's beloved bhakta and preacher Sri Keshab Chandra Sen.

On Holi day the coloured water is poured. It is a symbol of the love which should flow out of our hearts to this broken, shattered world. It is the need of the time that we should colour our spirit. How much longer will we stay unaware, uncon-

scious in slumber? Holi's message is to awake! Wake up others! See! We are wandering and going astray. How much longer will we roam and wander thus? How much longer will we remain inebriated and unaware? The Holi's message is Awake! Awake! Perceive! Open our eyes and look. See our real home, our true realm. Look! Observe! The lights of the temple are twinkling. Look at those lights, Awake! Awake! Look! Colour our spirit! We are all foreigners here. We are travelers. We are pilgrims. Why have we come here? Holi day reminds us that we are to colour our spirit. How is it that instead of nourishing our spirit, we are unnecessarily frittering away our lives? Year after year does roll by. We are wasting away our life. Our jobs and chores, Our business and work are mercy activities of oblivion. We keep running. As we chase after our desires, we are panting away. Huffing and puffing, one day we will give up our last breath. Aah! What did we come here for? We come here to colour our spirit. This is the true message of "Holi". This world is a clay oven. The Beloved's oven. In this oven let us dye colour our spirit.

(a) The first colour is longing or thirst. Call out to the Lord with longing. Our business and offices, our work and jobs, are all a falsehood. Within them thirst does not exist for the Lord. Therefore, Holi's message is that we can go ahead with our work. We must attend to our duties. But instill within them, His remembrance.

(b) Another colour which Holi Festival asks us to be poured is love. With a love-filled heart, enter the arena of this world. Share our love with one another. God is love. Give love to one another. Treat each other with love. Speak lovingly. Serve suffering ones with love. Eat with love. Drink with love. Come and go in love. Walk in love. All else is false beside love. The first sign of love is not to see the faults and failings of others. We should see the strengths and qualities of others. Let us bow down before each one, get their blessings.

(c) Holi's message is Chaitanya's message. He says that try to be a Tree. The Tree giveth shade even to him who cutteth off the branches of the Tree. When shall we listen to this message? When shall we be banded together in a loving Brotherhood? When shall we be like a Tree?

(d) The colours of Patience, Kindness, Humility, Forgiveness, Desirelessness, Sacrifice and Universality that this auspicious

day of Holi showers on us enrich our spirit and make us a new.

(i) Patience- is necessary to avoid dissipating our energies. Perseverance helps us achieve the goals we desire.

(ii) Kindness- looks for opportunities to serve those in need. There are people whose hearts are burdened with worry and anxiety. This Holi day tells us that we must go and lighten their loads. The day on which we have not helped someone in need, a brother here, a sister there, a bird here, an animal there, is a lost day indeed.

(iii) Humility- when humility wakes up, the mask of pride falls. Let us say rather prove through action that we are a zero. We are not the English zero which occupies some space, we are a nukta a point.

(iv) Forgiveness- it is prerogative of love to give and forgive. We must try to be Tree. When we pelt stones on it, the tree gives us fruit.

(v) Desirelessness- Desire of love is the will of God. Let us bear witness to our words. Let us take the road less travelled. We should not be tempted with the world's pleasures and chose a path of desirelessness for ourselves. Why is it that we lose our balance? Because our wishes, our desires are thwarted. Because, we have attachment will material world.

(vi) Sacrifice- The colour of sacrifice brings in a strength in us to love all creatures without desiring or expecting anything in return. Only life lived with a sense of service and sacrifice in worth living. This colour gives a deserving strength to our spirit. Every opportunity that this broken instrument (human body) is presented with to help, serve and heal should be taken advantage of. Later, sufficient time will be there to provide needed rest. Being in touch with the healing forces of nature helps us to restore calm, peace and a sense of harmony to our life.

(vii) Universality- This colour helps us to bring radiance in our spirit by imbibing the great value of the One-in-All and the All-in-One, and Reverence for all things, animate and inanimate. Try to treat everything, everyone, with respect, love and reverence. This promising day of 'Holi' colours our spirit to become an epitome of all colours of the spectrum of the light of love. The world needs a new civilisation, simplicity, sympathy, service, sense of universal Brotherhood/Sisterhood the civilisation for which the great ones of humanity have worked age after age.

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# THE MESSAGE OF HOLI

## Holi symbolises unity in diversity

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

India is the country of diverse cultures, traditions, customs, rituals and festivals and in different parts of the country different festivals are celebrated with pomp and show. Holi is one such festival and is rightly called as the festival of colors but is celebrated although in different ways across the length and breadth of India, however the sprinkling of the colors is common to all parts of the country. The festival of Holi fosters the unity and togetherness among the people of the country and therefore this festival of colors has got special importance for national cohesion and unity. The festival of Holi is celebrated to bade goodbye to winter and to welcome the season of spring and thus the Holi symbolizes positivity in life and is celebrated to encourage and have the feeling of positivity which is so important for life of the individual. This festival is celebrated to discourage and shun all negativity in lives of the people. The pertinent question is why do the people celebrate the festival of Holi and different legends stand woven around the celebration of the festival. In fact as already said Holi is celebrated in honor of the arrival of spring, the end of winter, the blossoming of love and for many it is the festive day to meet others, play, laugh, forget and forgive and above all to repair broken relationships. The festival also celebrates the beginning of a good spring harvest season. Generally it lasts for a night and a day, starting on the evening of the Purnima-full moon day falling in the Hindu calendar month of Phalguna, which falls around the middle of March in the Gregorian calendar. The first evening is known as Holika Dahan the burning of Demones Holika or Chhoti Holi and the following day as Holi. The Holi festival of colors in India is a celebration of the victory of good over evil, the destruction of the demones Holika. It is said that Harenyakashap the cruel king was asking all to worship him as he proclaimed to one and all that he was the god and thus he wanted his son Prahlad who was the Vishnu bargaht also to worship him the Harenyakashap. But Prahlad did not accede to it and so Harenyakashap ordered that



his son to be burned along with his own sister Holika who was fire resistant and so it was conspired that Prahlad would be burnt in the lap of his aunt. But a miracle happened that there was no harm to Prahlad, however his aunt Holika got burnt and was reduced to ashes. Thus to commemorate the victory of good over the evil the Holi is celebrated. Holi is an important Hindu festival but it is celebrated by the Sikhs, Jains and communities across the spectrum and it fosters the spirit of oneness and mutual brotherhood and gives strength to tolerance and secularism. In fact all the important festivals are celebrated jointly by all the communities and this is the beauty of this land and of the principle and practice of unity in diversity which is the principle characteristic of India. The festival of Holi is celebrated in different forms and ways in different states but the sprinkling of the color is common in all states of India. Thus most Indian states have their own way of celebrating Holi. In the state of UP men and women sing popular songs and shout chants to Radha and Krishna. In Kanpur Holi lasts for seven days and the last day has a grand fair called Ganga Mela or Holi Mela. In Gorkhpur, Holi begins with a special puja and through the day brotherhood

is celebrated among people. In Barsana village Lathmar Holi is celebrated. According to myths, Holi began in Barsana region of India, which includes Vrindavan, Mathura, Nandgaon, and Barsana. Interestingly the festival here is celebrated with not just colors but with Lathis. It is said that children of Mathura annoy child Krishna and ask him why is he of black-shyam color and on this Youshodha calla child Krishna to sprinkle any color on the children and therefore Krishna did the same and sprinkled colors on the children and the Gopies. Thus it became the practice in Barsana Utter Pradesh that females beat males with Lathis and it is known as the Lathmar Holi and this practice is present even to this day. With great gusto and anticipation, the people of India welcome Holi the festival of colors. But did you imagine there could be so many incredibly different ways this festival is celebrated in different places of India. Holi at Mathura and vrindavan is celebrated with great gusto for many days. For these were the places where Krishna spent most of his childhood. Situated in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, the celebrations there span over a week or so. Each major temple housing the idol of Krishna and Radha cele-

brate Holi on a different day. People throng the temples to get drenched in colored waters and make merry and joy and sing songs in praise of lord Krishna and Radha. In Punjab, a ritual called Holi Mohalla was initiated by the Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh where Holi is celebrated by demonstrating physical agility by indulging in martial arts. Punjab celebrates Holi Mohalla which looks sounds and feels like Holi for warriors. It is celebrated a day before Holi. The day starts early on the day of Holi, people get dressed to play and stock up on the colors and sweets to welcome their friends to play and enjoy. The Holi celebrations in Punjab bring with it a riot of colors, songs, dancing and scrumptious treats all to welcome spring.

Traditionally Holi Mohalla is the way Holi is celebrated in Punjab but the typical tradition of playing with color and water, continues to be the integral part of the festivities. In Punjab the Holi is the occasion to mingle with friends and family. It is the occasion to forgive and forget and embrace one and all as the colors signify the binding and mixing with all. In some parts of the Uttar Pradesh the idols of Holika are burnt to remember the victory of good over the evil. It is said that on the next day of

the burning of Holika the ashes of the demones were thrown on friends and relatives and this changed into sprinkling of the colors on the people. Thus the festival of Holi is celebrated in different ways in different parts of the country but the sprinkling of the colored water is common to all the Holi celebrations. On the occasion of Holi people sprinkle colors on the friends and on the passers by and dance to the beats of the drums and enjoy and make merry. In Maharashtra the festival of Holi is celebrated as the Rang panchmi with gaiety and the colors are sprinkled on the friends and relatives. The festival of Holi fosters the mutual brotherhood and strengthens the spirit of unity and cohesion and thus this festival helps in strengthening the bonds of communal harmony and mutual brotherhood. Therefore this festival gives strength the pluralism and secularism which is badly needed for the flourishing of the secular democracy. Thus the festival of colors unites the people of different religions though it is a Hindu festival. In Gorkhpur people visit their friends and sprinkle colored water and sing songs in praise of Lord Krishna and Radha and it unites the people. Thus the spirit of oneness is fostered by celebrating this festival jointly by the different communities. The people throw colored water upon their friends and relatives and visit the houses of their friends and relatives and sing songs, enjoy and make merry. People of India wait impatiently for the arrival of the Holi festival and embrace the festival with open arms and use different colors and sprinkle it on the friends and relatives and even on the passersby.

It is good if the eco-friendly Holi is celebrated by the people with the use of natural colors so that there is no harm to anyone and to the environment. Thus the festival of holi fosters the unique characteristic of the unity in diversity and strengthens this trait and theme of India.

Let us all celebrate the festival of colors with great enthusiasm and fervor and may this festival be a harbinger of mutual brotherhood and peace?